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THE

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Anne Manning

THE

DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

Young and old all brought their troubles,
Small and great, for me to hear:
I have often bless'd my sorrow,
That drew others' grief so near.
ADELAIDE PROCTER.

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DEDICATED

TO

MY TWO DEAR NIECES,

FLORENCE AND ELLEN.

970

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

"I THINK I have been laid up nearly two years on this sofa, Phillis?" said I.

"Two years, come the 6th of October," said Phillis.

"And, during that time, what mercies I have received! what alleviations, what blessings!"

"What sea-kale and early spare-o'-grass! what baskets of grapes and pottles of strawberries!" said Phillis.

"What songs in the night, what in-pourings of strength!" said I.

"So many pheasants, too, and partridges!" said Phillis. "Teal, woodcocks, and wild ducks!"

"David might well say, the Lord maketh our bed in our sickness, Phillis," said I.

"Such a pretty bed as it is, too!" said Phillis. "So white, sweet, and clean! Russia sheets and

Marseilles quilt, bleached on a heath common, close by a sweetbriar hedge!"

"Not only that—" said I.

"Not only that," said Phillis, "but such pretty daisy-fringe to the curtains, and a clean tarletan blind to the window."

"Such a lovely view from the window!" said I.

"'Ever charming, ever new.'"

"You see everything that goes by," said Phillis.

"Yes, Phillis. And then the hill! I scarcely ever look at it without saying to myself, 'I will look unto the hill from whence cometh my help.'"

"The doctor lives the other way, though," said Phillis.

"I am never weary of watching the continually varying effects of light and shade on it. And yet, how loath I was to settle in this place! But, directly I saw that hill, with its steep, chalky sides, its patches of short turf, its fringe of beeches at the top, and its kilns and lime-burners' cottages at the base, with the steep bridle-roads and sheep-tracks winding up it, I felt, 'That hill

is my fate: there must be a fresh air blowing over it, a fine view from it; and, with God's blessing, it may make me wiser, healthier, and happier than I am now.' "

"It hasn't made you healthier, though," said Phillis.

"O yes, Phillis, it did. For a long while after I came here, I used to walk to it, and at length up it, every day. At first, I was surprised to find how steep and long the road was, even to its foot."

"Oh, it's a goodish step," said Phillis.

"But I thought nothing of it afterwards," said I. "At first I used to call it (to myself), the Hill Difficulty. After that, the Hill of Conquered Wishes."

"Because you couldn't get to the top," suggested Phillis.

"Not only that. There were a good many things I wished altered—things that I could not alter for myself, and that I did not feel quite sure it would be right to pray to God to alter."

"Such as puddles and miry bits of road," said Phillis.

"No, not things of that sort. And so I used

to think them over, as I walked up that hill, and struggle with myself to take them kindly, humbly, and submissively, as they were, such seeming to be God's will; and at length I succeeded."

"That was a good job," said Phillis.

"At the top of the hill, there was a steep patch of turf, on which, as it seemed to me, grew every wild-flower that I knew. I used to call it (to myself), the Garden of the Lord."

"Wasn't that rather wicked?" said Phillis.

"Why, whose else was it, Phillis? Man had nothing to do with it."

"A woman had, you mean," said Phillis.

"No, I don't."

"Why, wasn't you a woman?—leastways, a lady?"

"But I had not had the planting of it."

"Oh, I didn't know it was planted," said Phillis. "You said the things growed wild."

"Well, so they did—the Lord planted them. I used to stand there, looking at them, and smelling them, and inhaling the sweet, fresh air, till He seemed nearer to me there than anywhere else."

"La!" said Phillis.

"Then, if I felt very strong, I used to go on yet further, and climb quite up to the trees at the top. I used to call that (to myself), the Wood of the Holy Spirit."

"I wonder you wasn't afraid," said Phillis.

"No, 'the voice of the Lord' seemed walking in the garden, and took away all fear. Of what should I be afraid?"

"Tramps," said Phillis.

"I never met any."

"That was a wonder, then," said Phillis, "for they mostly come right away over that hill, to and from the Fox's Hole."

"Stay a minute, Phillis, and I will explain to you why I never was afraid."

"Dear me! and I've been awaiting and awaiting all this time," cried Phillis, "to baste the chicken! I only stepped away from it for a moment, to give you your medicine!"

"Go, baste the chicken, then, Phillis. I beg your pardon for detaining you. I forgot how many things you have to do, and to think of. Go, Phillis, and baste the chicken."

This is just the way she goes on from day to day. It is certainly very discouraging. An invalid finds it particularly hard to be without a sympathizer; or, at any rate, a companion that can understand one. As to calling me "ma'am," she does not—and will not—once a week. But a Norway deal won't take the polish of mahogany; and a rough, stout, country servant, will not convert into a Mrs. Flounce or a Mrs. Mincing. It is surprising what work she can get through—what weights she can lift. I am sure she could lift *me*.

The way I came to have Phillis was this. My nice maid, Hannah, married; and Jane, her successor, did not suit me at all. My energetic neighbour, Miss Burt, who is almost too bustling and busy for her friends, came in one day when I was very ill, and told me she had found me a "sterling creature," who would suit me exactly. I had never empowered her to look out. And when I heard that this sterling creature had only lived in a farm, and afterwards with an old single

gentleman, I did not feel very desirous to enter into treaty with her. Miss Burt, however, told me she had told her "there could be no harm in calling," in which I did not quite coincide; and she enlarged so much on her fidelity, sobriety, honesty, cleanliness, and general proficiency, that I was somewhat overpowered, and agreed to see the young person when she called, if I were well enough. "Young! oh, she won't see thirty again!" cried Miss Burt, as she swung out of the room; and indeed I believe several more years had been numbered by this "daughter of the plough." But Phillis is exceeding sensitive on the subject. "My age is my own," says she, shortly; "my age, and my name." The latter, however, she told me one day, in an uncommon fit of good humour, had been given her by her father because it was in a favourite old song of his. "And when parson," pursued Phillis, "objected that it wasn't a *Christian* name, father said he should like to know whose business it was to choose the name, his or the parson's. So there," added Phillis, triumphantly, "I fancy father had the best on't!"

I thought of Crabbe:

> "'Why Lonicera wilt thou name thy child?'
> I asked the gardener's wife, in accents mild.
> 'We have a right,' replied the sturdy dame:
> And Lonicera was the infant's name."

Rather against the grain, I engaged Phillis. I was too ill to lose time, and too ill to superintend her first start, consequently she fell into her own way of doing things, and will not now adopt any improvement on them without more exertion of authority on my part than I often feel inclined for. I put up with her—and, perhaps, she puts up with me.

After living many of my earlier years neither in town nor country, but in one of the western suburbs of London, I cannot express the pleasure with which I hailed the novelty of a real country life. To exchange a house in a row for a detached dwelling, in the midst of hills, copses, and cow-pastures, was so delightful as to afford some compensation for removing far away from many whom I dearly loved. Seven

years my good husband and I shared in tranquil married happiness; and, as he had previously been a busy man in the city, the country was as new to him as to me.

It is a good thing for leisurely people, of whatever age, to acquire the habit of noting down what they observe of interest, in a new position. To such a habit, we owe the rich storehouse of John Evelyn's "Journal," and White's "Natural History of Selborne;" two books which, perhaps, no country but England could have produced. On going to Nutfield, I resolved to observe everything, try many an experiment, keep a note-book, and ask many questions.

We obtained possession of our house at Christmas; but did not go down to it till the middle of February. In that month (as I failed not to enter in my journal) the white wagtail re-appears, the woodlark, thrush, and chaffinch begin to sing, rooks and partridges to pair, and geese to lay. Mr. Cheerlove told me that the clamorous rook, the cheerful cuckoo, the swift-darting marten, and the lively, sociable little red-breast, had been called the birds of the

four seasons. We arrived at Nutfield in the rooks' honeymoon.

The first thing that struck us was the air. How cold, but how fresh it was! How clear and free from smoke the atmosphere! A thin blue mist rose from the ground, but it was but the ghost of a London fog. Then again, as Mr. Cheerlove remarked, the dirt, plentiful as it was, merely consisted of earth and water mixed together, without any abominable additions, and, compared with London mire, might even be called *clean* dirt. The leafless condition of the trees gave us the opportunity of admiring the forms of their branches — the gradual and beautiful decrease of size and increase of delicacy between the sturdy trunks and the smallest twigs. The landscape was not destitute of green: the grass, though scanty and coarse, still retained its colour, and much of the growing wood was coated with fine moss; while the glossy laurel and cheerful holly contrasted with the sober laurustinus. Here and there, in the garden, we found a snowdrop, a hepatica, a yellow aconite, a Christmas rose,

and a few sweet-scented blossoms of the alpine coltsfoot.

When we began to explore the neighbourhood, we found scarcely any wild-flowers, save now and then a daisy or sprig of gorse, or that common-looking nettle that bears the splendid name of white archangel. But we could say "a good time is coming!" and cheerfully await it. Meanwhile the horse-chestnut, hazel, and honeysuckle were budding, and the chickweed was putting forth its small white flowers; while the robin, sparrow, wren, and thrush sang blithely among the bushes, and the lark poured forth a short but lively song over our heads.

Mr. Cheerlove had accumulated a great many books, which, on wet days, it was his delight to arrange. We had two country maids and a boy, who found enough to do, but were not overworked. The first year we made scarcely any acquaintances; but my sister Eugenia, many years younger than myself (now, alas! no more), was frequently with us; and, after our loved mother's death, lived with us entirely. Before she did so, Mr. Cheerlove and I used frequently

to take little journeys in our one-horse carriage, jogging on from one place to another, putting-up, when it suited us, at some neat inn, and there spending a day, half-day, or two or three days, according to the attractions of the neighbourhood. In this way we strayed through many counties, and made acquaintance with many rivers, towns, villages, churches, cathedrals, old castles, and abbeys.

At the end of seven years, my good husband died. He was several years my senior, but I loved him—oh so dearly! and respected him so deeply! He was not what is called a shining man, but with the kindest heart, an equable temper, well-stored mind, a deliberate manner that gave great impression to what he said or read, without being in the least tedious, and a habit of employing himself beyond all praise.

He was gone; and the sunshine of my life was gone too! It seemed to me as though I had never valued him enough while he was alive—might have expressed more demonstrative affection. We never had an unkind word.

Dear man! how I love to think of him!

The memory of his dear, placid face, his harmonious voice, his gentle touch, and tread, and tone, makes my heart swell!

Eugenia and I were then left together. She had nothing; I was not rich; and we quitted Nutfield, and went into a country town. We had once been members of a large, cheerful family, but death had mown them all down, and reserved his keenest, most relentless edge for the last. After a few uneventful years, Eugenia became fatally ill. She died; and I was left alone! And then I came here.

People were very kind to me. Miss Burt was my first acquaintance, and I must say she did me good service; never resting till she had fixed me under this roof. Indeed, she is seldom happier than when doing something for somebody; her only faults, that I know of, being a love of vexatious, petty domination, and a great impatience of check. Having nailed me here, as she called it, she next took me round to a few poor people under the hill, whom she put, as it were, under my charge; saying her own hands were full enough, and too full

already, and the superintendence would rouse me, and do me good. I shall never forget her tone and attitude when, on entering one of these cottages, and espying a small grease-spot on the floor, she stood transfixed, and tragically exclaimed—

"What's *that* I see?"

The poor woman looked cowed; and I am sure I felt so.

When we came out, Miss Burt said to me, complacently and with a little authority, "That's the way you must do things." She had looked into every corner, turned up the basins and tea-cups, detected a black-beetle, which scudded away with a very reasonable instinct of self-preservation, and removed the match-box, which she said was too near the fire.

It might be her way, but I could never make it mine. I could not defy the *Lares* and *Lemures* of a rustic hearth in that fashion; and never could make myself more at home in a poor person's dwelling than its owner. But perhaps Miss Burt did most good.

Time had its healing effect. I had practically

learnt that here we have no "continuing city," and the impression of the lesson was perhaps weakening, when I was laid low by a prostrating and painful illness, that at first threatened my life, and then left me in a state of weakness and incapacity that has confined me two years to this sofa.

Thus, the story of my life is comprised in few words. And yet I retain the habit of jotting down its nothings. As a favourite writer of mine in *Fraser's Magazine* has said, "There is a richness about the life of a person who keeps a diary, unknown to others. A million more little links and ties must bind him to the members of his family circle, and to all among whom he lives. Life, to him, is surrounded, intertwined, entangled with thousands of slight incidents, which give it beauty, kindliness, reality."

I wish Harry Prout would leave off writing poetry. He might do something good in prose, but he has a taste, which he mistakes for a talent, for verse. There are many books of the day which

he might translate well, if he would but seize the passing moments as they fly.

Harry looked in this evening, and gladly remained to drink tea with me. There was a small iced plum-cake on the tea-table, a present from Mrs. Secker; and I was pleased to see the lad pay his respects to it pretty handsomely. We got quite cozy and confidential over our little meal. He looked about him with satisfaction, and said, "Everything is so trig and tidy here! I wish we were in your easy circumstances, Mrs. Cheerlove."

I laughed, and said, "My circumstances are very narrow, however easy I may make them—or take them."

"They may be comparatively easy, though, if not absolutely, I think, ma'am."

"Yes, there are comparative and absolute values."

"Compared, for instance, with those of a straitened family like ours."

"Ah, Harry, there are so many of you! Your father has a larger income than mine, but there is not so much to spend per head. But soon, my dear boy, some of you will be able to increase it;

and, meanwhile, comfort yourself with the reflection that the real or imagined necessary expenses of those who have large means, are greater than those of persons who have only small ones."

"I can't make the reflection, ma'am, because I don't believe it."

"It is so, though, I assure you. Take the case of a number of persons (I quote Archbishop Whately) of each amount of income, from a hundred a year to a hundred thousand, and you will find the preponderance of those who are in pecuniary difficulties constantly augmenting as you proceed upwards."

"If the *fact* be so, ma'am, of course I cannot controvert it; but I cannot see how it should be so."

"And when you come to sovereign states, whose revenues are reckoned by millions, you will scarcely find one of them that is not involved in debt."

"Ah, they have so many public expenses."

"And private people have so many private expenses. The temptation to spend increases faster than the wealth."

"Well, it seems to me, that if I had but competence, I could keep within my income."

"At first you would; but your ideas of competence would alter. At least, it is the common tendency of people to go beyond their means. I feel it in myself."

"*You?*" incredulously.

"Yes, indeed, Harry. Perhaps I think how shabby and faded the crimson window-curtain begins to look, and I find I can afford to buy a new one. Then I consider that the new window-curtain will make the old carpet look very bad, and I find I cannot have that without pinching. Besides, the new carpet would entail the expense of a new rug; and then the fluted silk of the cabinet piano must be renewed; and, after all, how little it would add to the expense to have new chintz for the sofa and chairs! Thus, expenses mount up—expenses I cannot afford."

"I see."

"So it ends in my not incurring any of them."

"Your curtain looks very nice, though, Mrs. Cheerlove."

"Ah, I had it dipped and embossed."

"Your chintz, too."

"That was washed and callendered."

"Well, I thought only such persons as mamma did those things."

"There is no need they should be obtruded, Harry."

"No, that's what I'm always so afraid of."

"Nor, if they happen to become known, is there any need to be ashamed."

"Ah, I can't help that."

"Not always, I dare say, being young and thin-skinned; but the less you annoy yourself that way, the better. So you think I am better off than *you?*"

"O yes, with this nice quiet room. You may smile, Mrs. Cheerlove, but really it's no joke, when a fellow wants to do a bit of writing, to have a parcel of children swarming about him, making all sorts of noises. It has such an effect sometimes on *me*, I know, that I am ready to declare the supreme good to be, a quiet room and leisure to use it."

"To write poetry in it—hey, Harry?"

"Well—perhaps—yes."

"Meanwhile, the high stool in the office—"

"May better be filled by some one else, ma'am."

"While you—

"'Invoke the Muses, and improve your vein.'

Do you admire Coleridge?"

"Oh immensely! Did he make that line?"

"Ah, Harry, you betray your ignorance of your favourite craft! No; the line is Waller's."

Harry blushed, and said, "You laid a trap for me."

"Not intentionally, I assure you. But my transition was rather abrupt. I was going to direct your attention to a favourite passage of mine in Coleridge's works."

"Pray do," said Harry, rising alertly and going to the bookcase.

"Bring me the second of those two small volumes, lettered 'Biographia Literaria.'"

"Oh, it's in prose!" said Harry, in disappointment.

"Prose by a poet, however—which, by-the-way, was the name of a pretty, though not very shining, little work by James Montgomery, that has now dropped out of sight. Here is the passage: it begins—'Never pursue literature as a trade. With one exception' (I think he means

Southey) 'I have never known an individual healthy or happy without some regular employment which does not depend on the will of the moment—'"

"Bah!" muttered Harry.

"'But can be carried on so far mechanically that an average quantum of health, spirit, and intellectual exertion are requisite for its faithful discharge.'"

"I'm surprised Coleridge should say that."

"Well, Harry, he was one of the many people who preach better than they practise. Hear me to the end—'Three hours of leisure, unalloyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly *genial* than weeks of compulsion.'"

"Ay, I never write but when the fit is on me," murmured Harry.

"'Money and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labour. The *hope* of them may often prove a stimulant to industry, but the *necessity* of acquiring them will,

in all works of genius, convert a stimulant into a narcotic.'

"It did in Sir Walter Scott's case," I observed.

"'Motives, by excess, reverse their very nature; and, instead of exciting, stun and stupify the mind. For it is one contradistinction of genius from talent, that its predominant end is always comprised in the means; and this is one of the many points of likeness between genius and virtue.'"

"Then I've a genius," cried Harry, laughing, "for I always write verses for the pleasure of writing, and not for money!"

"Stop, my dear boy, hear him out—'My dear young friend, I would say to every one who feels the genial power working within him, suppose yourself established in any honourable occupation. From the counting-house, the law-courts, or from visiting your last patient, you return at evening to your family, prepared for its social enjoyments; with the very countenances of your wife and children brightened by the knowledge that, as far as they are concerned, you have satis-

fied the demands of the day. Then, when you retire into your study—' "

"I wish I had one!" sighed Harry.

"'You revisit in your books so many venerable friends with whom you can converse. But why should I say *retire?* The habits of active life will tend to give you such self-command that the presence of your family will be no interruption. Nay, the social silence, or undisturbing voices of a wife or sister, will be like a restorative atmosphere, or soft music, which moulds a dream without becoming its object.' "

"What beautiful English he writes," said Harry.

I was interrupted where I last left off by the entrance of the three young Pevenseys, with their governess, Mademoiselle Foularde, whom I had supposed still at the sea-side. But it appears that an epidemic had broken out at Hardsand, which occasioned their immediate return to the Stone House. I was very glad to see them all; they seemed to bring sunshine into my shady little room; and I had a toy railway-engine for

the amusement of my little friends, which delighted the two young ones exceedingly. Arabella, or, as they frightfully abbreviate her name, Arbell, has grown quite tall and womanly, for a girl of fourteen. She has her mother's good profile, but is dark, like her father, and the expression of her face is rather stern and repelling. Mademoiselle was charming; but I do not think she and her eldest pupil go on comfortably together. Whenever I addressed a remark to Arbell, Mademoiselle answered it, and went on speaking so as to detain my attention; this occurred three times, and I could observe Arbell look annoyed. As for Flora and Rosaline, they had a regular boxing-match, when they thought I was not looking. I caught Rosaline's hand in mine, with the little fist doubled up, and said, "Why, Rosaline! you quite surprise me! I did not know you were a pugilist!"

She opened her large blue eyes, as if amazed at my interference, and then seemed disposed to laugh; but I said quite gravely—"No, no, we have no fighting here. If it is allowed at the Stone House, I don't allow it in my parlour."

"It is not allowed at the Stone House, but

they do it for all that!" burst forth Arbell, and then shut herself up again in rigid silence. Mademoiselle Foularde darted an indignant look at her, and then drew Flora towards her, fondling her, and saying—

"*Ah, fi donc, Rosaline! Bonne petite Fleurette! comme je l' aime!* I never saw her fight before, did I?"

"How *can* you say so!" muttered Arbell, and then sighed, and began to play with her little dog Shock.

After this, the conversation rather flagged; but I showed the little ones some prints I was meaning to paste into a nursery picture-book; and when I had quite won their good-will, kissed them, and said, "You won't fight again, will you?" Both said "No" very cordially; and Mademoiselle and I exchanged looks and smiled, and then I said, "I am sure you remember that pretty verse:

> "'But, children, you should never let
> Such angry passions rise;
> Your little hands were never made
> To tear each other's eyes!'

What *were* they made for, hey?"

Both gave me a quick look, but seemed at fault.

"Why, to work, and to write, and to draw, and to paint pictures, and hold knives and forks, and spoons, and slices of plum-cake, and to give pence and sixpences to poor people, and a thousand other good and pleasant things. Will you remember?"

Both smiled, and said "Yes;" and then I produced slices of the iced plum-cake Harry Prout had cut up, and told them to hand the plate first to Mademoiselle and Arbell, and then to help themselves. This produced general good humour and sociability, and, after the cake had been duly honoured, Mademoiselle rose to take leave, saying she feared they had stayed too long, but that it was so difficult to get away from *me,* I so charmingly blended instruction with entertainment, &c. &c. &c., which I might have liked better if I had not thought it rather exaggerated and insincere.

I said to Arbell at parting, "I have seen and heard too little of you. What a treat it would be if you would spend a morning with me, and help me to make this picture-book."

Her face brightened directly, and she exclaimed, "Ah! I only wish I might!" But Mademoiselle interposed with something about Mrs. Pevensey's wish that the school-room routine should suffer no interruption, with a little smile and shrug to me, as much as to say, "So, of course, we must obey;" and Arbell went away, looking as rigid and uncomfortable as at first, carrying Shock under her arm.

In the afternoon, to my surprise, Mrs. Pevensey's elegant carriage stopped at my little garden-gate, and Mrs. Pevensey herself came in. She was charming with smiles and good-nature; and, in her delicate silver-grey silk, rich velvet, and blush roses, looked so youthful, that one could hardly suppose her the mother of seven children. She has a well-stored mind, ready wit, or rather, playfulness, good judgment, and everything that contributes to make a delightful companion. As a wife she is admirable, living on the most affectionate terms with a husband who is considered by most people rather hard to please; she has formed

extensive plans for ameliorating the condition of the poor, which she is carrying out with great success; and, as a neighbour, she is most thoughtful and kind—as I have good reason to know.

She brought her own entertainment with her; for her conversation was an almost uninterrupted flow of what she had done, whom she had seen, where she had been, interspersed with remarks full of good feeling and good sense. I must say that, to an invalid, this continuous flow is sometimes more fatiguing than if the communications were more reciprocal and broken up. The mind is kept on the full stretch; the eyes gaze on the speaker till they ache, and even the bodily posture becomes wearisome; yet I am sure the kind friend always goes away thinking, in the goodness of her heart, "Well, I have amused her nicely, and given her a good many things to think about," which is true, too, though they have been purchased rather dearly.

It was only after Mrs. Pevensey had told me a multiplicity of things, and was going away, that

I found the opportunity of telling her how glad I had been to see her children quite recovered from the effects of the measles.

"Yes," said she, with a motherly smile, "they all look well—all, at least, except poor Arbell; and *she*—" (Here she gave a little shrug, like Mademoiselle, as much as to say, "Something is not quite straight in that quarter.")

"I told Arbell I wished she might be permitted to spend an hour or two with me some morning," said I. "If I have more than one companion at a time, I can hardly do them or myself justice."

"I am sure I wish she would come," said Mrs. Pevensey, smiling sweetly.

"With your permission, I think she will," said I. "May I claim it?"

"Ah, I shall be too happy," said she; "but you don't know Arbell."

"Suppose, then, we say to-morrow," said I, pertinaciously.

"To-morrow the hair-cutter is coming. Any other day."

"The day after to-morrow, then?"

"With all my heart, if— I don't know what Mademoiselle will say."

"Mademoiselle seemed to think the same of *you.*"

"Of *me?* Oh, I've no voice in the matter! Mademoiselle has unlimited sway in the school-room. Mademoiselle is a most excellent creature. I have unbounded confidence in her. She is quite superior to her position — came to me from the Comtesse de St. Velay — has written an admirable essay on education—her brother is professor of foreign literature at Tarbes."

"Perhaps Mademoiselle uses your name as a kind of authority."

"Very likely," laughing sweetly; "*Mamma's* name is probably made free use of, in the school-room and nursery. I remember when, 'I'll tell your Mamma!' was a terror to myself. Oh, we all go through these things in our turn. Poor, dear Arbell! there is excellent promise in her; but at present she is under a cloud. She lives in a world of her own, is proud and stubborn, and Mademoiselle says her spirit must be

broken. It may be so, but I don't wish to stand by and witness the operation."

"I am sorry to hear you say that," cried I, anxiously, "for I think the operation so extremely hazardous, that it ought only to take place under the mother's eye."

"It would affect me more," answered she, very seriously, "than a surgical case."

"I can quite believe it," replied I, with equal seriousness; "but possibly your sagacity and maternal affection united would enable you to discern that no such painful course was needed. If Arbell were a little more under your eye—"

"My dear friend," interrupted she, "Arbell is constantly under my eye already. Do you imagine I shut myself up from my children? No, no! that would indeed be neglecting a mother's first duty. Dry recapitulation of lessons, indeed, and endless practising, fall exclusively to the superintendence of the governess; but Arbell always *learns* her lessons and writes her exercises in the room with me, for hours every morning."

"I am heartily glad to hear it," said I, with a sense of relief.

"We lunch together—that is, they have their early dinner when we lunch," pursued Mrs. Pevensey; "always except when we have friends. And though my afternoons are generally engaged in drives, and the children of course do not appear at the late dinner, they may always do so at dessert, and the younger ones always *do*. In the evenings, it is very much at Arbell's option, or, at least, at Mademoiselle's, whether they appear or not. Sometimes Arbell has lessons to prepare; sometimes she is engaged in her own devices; and really, I think they are more healthful and suitable for a young girl than large mixed parties, when silly people too often say silly things to children, so that frequently I am not sorry to miss her from the drawing-room. And now, good-by! I have paid an unconscionable visit; but there is no getting away from *you*. I am so glad you are—I *think* you are better?"

"Thank you, yes. Then I shall see Arbell the day after to-morrow?"

"Undoubtedly, if she will come. At what hour? They dine at two."

"Shall I say eleven?"

"Yes, do; and I will send for her at half-past one, because it is nearly half-an-hour's walk. Good-by, good-by! I must make peace as I can with Mademoiselle."

And she left me with an engaging smile.

Arbell has been, and gone. She came in rather before eleven, carrying her little white lap-dog, who had a new scarlet ribbon round his neck. I saw directly that the cloud was gone,—she looked as fresh as a rose, and as cheerful as a lark.

"Good girl, for being so punctual," said I.

"Punctual!" said she. "Why, I hope I'm more than that, or Shock and I have raced in vain! I would not let old John come with me more than half way, and then we took to our heels and ran—didn't we, Shock?"

"I feel the compliment," said I, very sincerely. "Perhaps, though, you would as soon have run in any other direction."

"No, I shouldn't," said she, with a bright look, as she untied the blue strings of her large straw hat, and threw it on the ground. The next minute she picked it up, and put it, with her gloves and visite, on a side-table.

"Why did you do that?" said I, curiously.

"Because you are not Mademoiselle. She says I never can be tidy, but you see I can."

"What people can be, they ought to be," said I.

"What people can be at some times they can't be at others," said Arbell. "Is it not so, Mrs. Cheerlove?"

"Yes, my love, sometimes."

"Thank you for calling me 'my love.'"

"By-the-by, why do they abbreviate your name into Arbell?"

"Because an ugly name is good enough for an ugly girl," said Arbell, quickly; and then, with a little self-reproach for so captious a speech, "No, the real reason is, because it is the abbreviation by which the celebrated Lady Arabella Stuart was called by her grandmother, the old Countess of Shrewsbury. Mamma read about her

in Miss Strickland's "Queens," I believe, and so took a fancy to call me Arbell."

"Though you do not like it."

"I like whatever mamma likes, almost."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, my love. Are you hungry?"

She looked at me artlessly, and said, "I should like a slice of bread-and-butter."

"Or jam?" said I.

"No, bread-and-butter. I should only have dry bread in the school-room—and scarcely that, because Mademoiselle says we ought not to be hungry before an early dinner."

"But you have had a walk," said I, ringing the bell; "and persons who have left off growing sometimes forget how hungry they were when they were not full-grown."

"*You* don't."

"Ah," said I, "young people only come to me by way of a treat—to me and to themselves. If you were with me much, I'm afraid I should spoil you."

"What *is* spoiling, Mrs. Cheerlove?"

"Can you ask?"

"I know what it is in the common acceptation of the word—it is what Mademoiselle does to Flora: she spoils her by letting her have her own way; but she spoils me by *never* letting me have mine!"

"It is easy to see, Arbell, that you are not very fond of Mademoiselle."

"How *can* I be?"

"(Some bread-and-butter, Phillis.) My dear, I cannot reply to your question, except by asking others; and I do not feel it quite right to seek a confidence which you do not repose in your own mother."

"I wish she would let me," said Arbell, with filling eyes.

"Why, my dear, you spend your mornings together."

"But how? Dear mamma is always preoccupied—by papa, by the housekeeper, by the gardener, by the nurses, by her own maid. She must always see poor little Arthur's spine rubbed herself" (here Phillis brought in the bread-and-butter, and went out), "and baby is cutting her teeth; and she has to give orders about her

Italian garden, and dinner, and relief for the poor, and the children's new dresses and her own, and to send baskets and hampers of things to grandpapa. Then, when all this is over, if I venture to begin with 'Mamma!' she says, 'My dear, I am writing a note.'"

A tear dropped on Shock's white coat, and she turned her head away. "Nobody has so small a share of her as I," said she; "and I love her so much!"

"My dear Arbell," said I, after a pause, "I cannot help thinking what an inestimable advantage it may be to you in after-life, to have had this training, this by-play, this insight, as a bystander, into your mother's life. You may yourself be placed at the head of an equally large establishment: many girls, so placed, after a life exclusively devoted to their own studies and amusements, are completely at sea. They have no practical knowledge, no taste even, for the daily duties which it is a woman's greatest honour and pleasure to discharge well; they are complete babies. They meet every emergency with a helpless, 'Well, I'm sure I can't tell what is to be

done!' and everything is at a stand-still, or goes the wrong way."

Arbell seemed struck. "That never occurred to me," said she.

"In spite of the elegancies by which your mother is surrounded, hers is, in reality, what many would pronounce, and find to be, a very hard life. Her cheerfulness, presence of mind, sound judgment, and love of order, enable her to get through its cares gracefully and successfully; so that those who only see the *face* of the enamelled watch, and not all its interior works and springs, little guess that her head, and even her hands, have more to do, in their own peculiar department, than those of some of her dependents."

"That may be true," said Arbell, reflectively. Then, after a short silence, "What would you do in my place?"

"Ah, my love, I should probably not do better in your place than you do, if as well."

"Oh, Mrs. Cheerlove!"

"The question is not what I, or any other person might do, but what *should be done.* A very able and excellent author—well known to

your mother—John Foster, has said, 'There is some one state of character, and plan of action, *the very best possible,* under all the circumstances of your age, measure of mental faculties, and means within your reach; the *one plan* that will please God the most, and that will be the most pleasing to look back upon at the hour of death.' Now, should not you aspire to ascertain what is that best possible course, and then most zealously devote yourself to its execution? I believe you to be capable of it."

Arbell looked full of high and generous resolve. "If mamma had said this to me," exclaimed she, at length, "I should have been capable of it long ago."

"Perhaps you have never spoken to her on the subject with the openness with which you have now spoken to me."

"I have never had the opportunity. However, I will not dwell any more on that. What is the one best course now for me?"

"There need be no marked change in outward performances: only in their spirit. Your mother loves you dearly, but she is too busy to attend to

all your little troubles. Do you be too busy for them too! Take an intelligent interest in whatever you are about, be it French, or German, or anything else; and if interrupted in it, and your attention distracted by what is being said to nurse, housekeeper, or gardener,—take an intelligent interest in that too! Think, 'Ha, here is something worth remembering!' treasure it, note it, commit it to memory, bear it in mind, lay it to heart; and then return with fresh eagerness to the matter in hand."

"It sounds well," said Arbell, thoughtfully; "I'll try."

"And if you cannot get others to sympathize with you, why, sympathize with *them*. It is easy to say, 'I can't; their tastes and feelings are so different.' So are yours from theirs, and yet you expect them to sympathize with *you*. Don't get into the way of feeling isolated. Robinson Crusoe really *was* so, and did not find it very comfortable, in spite of his pretty plantations and snug cave. If you plant yourself on a little island, and break down the bridge to it, you must not expect people to be at the trouble of fetching a boat. Besides,

you perhaps seek sympathy at unseasonable times. Your father, in the midst of some profound calculation, would hardly like your mother to come in and claim his attention to some sentimental sorrow: she thought he had looked coldly at her on such and such an occasion; or could hardly have been aware, such another time, that she felt low and unwell."

"No, indeed," said Arbell, laughing.

"Nor must you expect Mrs. Pevensey to have leisure or relish for such ill-timed appeals from yourself. Be intent on forming a noble character; and you will be sure to find that character appreciated in after-life."

"Ha!"

"You will try, will you not?"

"I will! if only Mademoiselle——"

"Ah, let us look on Mademoiselle as some one placed in close relation to you by our heavenly Father for wise purposes of His own, which He does not think it necessary to communicate to her or to you. And now eat your bread and butter."

She did so, having first given me a hearty kiss.

I am always glad when fine, bright weather on a Sunday morning favours the church-goers, though I am debarred by bodily infirmities from joining the multitude on their way to the house of God, and swelling the voice of praise and thanksgiving among such as keep holy-day. And though my eyes have sometimes swelled with tears, and my heart yearned with vain longings, as I have seen the scattered parties trooping past my gate, yet more often, far more often, I have silently bidden them good speed, and mentally repeated that sweet and soothing sonnet of Mrs. Hemans—

"How many blessed groups this hour are bending
Through England's primrose-meadow paths their way!
Toward spire and tower, 'mid shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day!
The halls, from old heroic ages grey,
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. *I* may not tread
With them these pathways; to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound. Yet, oh my God! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbings stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness."

And, since I have been no longer bound to the sick-bed, but only to the house, my thankfulness has deepened under a cheerful sense of alleviated pains and added blessings; so that I may sincerely say my home-kept Sabbaths have generally been very calm and sweet.

I have made out a little routine for myself, which I adhere to pretty closely. Having early in life acquired the habit of rising betimes, I have no temptation to curtail the Sunday by lying in bed; nor is Phillis so overworked as to need, or even to wish for, an extra hour's sleep. I therefore hear her stirring as soon as the clock strikes six; and, till she comes to afford me a little assistance at seven, I lie tranquilly cogitating on God's mercies, lifting up my heart to Him, and almost invariably repeating that hymn of Hugh White's, which so fitly opens the invalid's Sunday.

> "Let me put on my fair attire,
> My Sabbath robes of richest dress,
> And tune my consecrated lyre,
> Lord of the Sabbath! thee to bless.
>
> "Oh, may no spot of sin to-day
> My raiment, clean and white, defile!
> And while I tune my heartfelt lay,
> Bend down on me thy gracious smile.

"Let holy feelings, heavenly themes,
Raise, and refresh, and fill my mind;
And earth's low vanities and schemes
No place nor entertainment find!

"The looks, the thoughts, the sweet employ
Of saints, whose treasure is above,
Be mine to-day! their zeal, their joy,
Their peace, and purity, and love.

"My spirit may with theirs unite,
My humble notes with theirs may blend,
Although denied the pure delight
Thy sacred courts with them to attend.

"The faith and patience of the saints,
These I may exercise each hour—
When, weak with pain, the body faints,
I best may exercise their power.

"O Saviour! with completion crown
Desires thou wakenest not in vain;
Stoop to thy lowly temple down,
Bring all these graces in thy train!

"This is thy day of bounty, Lord!
I ask no small, no stinted boon,
But showers, rich showers of blessing, poured
On me, though worthless and alone.

"If the weak tendril round thee twine,
It ne'er is hidden from thine eye:
I cling to thee, life-giving Vine,
Strength, verdure, fruitfulness supply!"

Hugh White, himself on the bed of sickness, used to send Mrs. Hemans beautiful flowers in her last illness; and perhaps he may have sent her this pretty hymn too. I should like to know that he did, and that it comforted her with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted: one Christian poet should fitly thus console another.

Having chewed the cud awhile on this sweet hymn, and possibly on one or two others, I begin my toilette with great deliberation. It is indeed always a lengthy process; not on account of any special self-decoration (of course, the "Sabbath robes of richest dress," in the hymn, have a purely figurative meaning, though I think respect for the day may be shown in the outward garb too), not because I delight in braiding of the hair and costly array; but on account of downright bodily weakness, which necessitates frequent little rests and intermissions: and as I have no one to hurry for, why should I hurry?

However, by eight o'clock I find my way to my sofa in the adjoining room, with the little breakfast table set near the fire in winter, and near the

open window in summer. I read a psalm, collect, and the epistle and gospel of the day, to myself, while I recover myself a little. I have no voice for reading aloud before breakfast. My breakfast is no great matter; it does not take long, neither do I hurry it; but when one has nothing to do but to eat and drink, it cannot be a very tedious occupation. Phillis clears the table, brings in her Bible, we read a portion, verse and verse alternately, and then I offer a prayer, and she then goes to her breakfast. Then I lie and meditate a little.

I have put secular books, newspapers, work-baskets, &c., out of the way overnight; so that the room has an orderly, Sabbath-like appearance. The large Bible and little Prayer-book are on the small table beside me: some other book also at hand, in the course of Sunday reading. My canary-bird must be attended to, Sunday as well as week-day. I give him my attention as soon as I am a little rested; and perhaps remain at the window a little, looking at the flowers in the garden-borders, the little children from the hill trooping to the school with their cold dinners

in their bags, and the hill itself, girdling in the prospect, and ever calling to mind the verse, "I will look unto the hill from whence cometh my help."

A widow woman, who nursed me during part of my illness, always comes to cook my dinner, and take care of me while Phillis goes to church. She gets her dinner for her pains, and sits placidly reading while the meat is roasting, now and then with an eye to the spit. Afterwards, she goes to afternoon service. She is too infirm, and too far from the church to be able to go more than once in the day.

Of course, I always have a few pleasant words with Mrs. Goodey; and sometimes she tells me of some case of distress among the cottagers, which I make it my business to relieve, or get some one to look into, the first opportunity. But punctually, as the clock strikes eleven, I commence my solitary prayer service, feeling it a special pleasure, as well as duty, to offer prayer and praise at the same time that my fellow Christians pray and praise.

Now, as I do not slavishly go through those

portions (they are but few), which can only be appropriately used collectively (St. Chrysostom's prayer, for instance), one would think I should arrive at the end of the morning service a good deal sooner than they do in church. Sooner, certainly, but not so much so as one might suppose. For, when thoughts wander, (and, alas! who is there among mortal men, who, in this respect, sometimes sinneth not?) I feel it incumbent on me to go over the ground again. Thus, if I repeat a clause in the litany mechanically, I feel that the least I can do is to repeat it with more attention, and something of contrition. Even the wicked king in "Hamlet" said:

> "My words fly up—my thoughts remain below:
> Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go!"

Thus, of course, the more I detect inattention, the more I lengthen the service. And then again, in the lessons, I frequently read the consecutive chapters, perhaps two or three. So that, sometimes, Mrs. Goodey comes in, to my surprise, to lay the cloth, before I have finished. But, more generally, I have done earlier, and lain back on

my sofa-cushion, and taken a good rest, gazing on my Sunday nosegay, and on my dear father's portrait on the wall. I have no likeness of my mother—not even a *silhouette;* she never would have one taken: but her face is indelibly stamped on my memory and heart.

Then Phillis bustles in with the one hot dish; and generally has brought home some scrap of news, which she is in haste to impart.

"Master Frank preached to-day." (The Rev. Francis Sidney is always, with her, Master Frank). "How well he do speak up, to be sure! The deafest in church might hear 'un. Well, I can't justly mind what 'twas about, but 'twas charity, I think, or else hope. No, 'twas charity; because he brought in, 'But the greatest of these is charity.' Yes, I know he did. Yes, yes—'twas on charity."

Then she adds that Mrs. Stowe's twins are going to be christened in the afternoon, by the names of Esau and Jacob. And then I observe that Esau and Jacob indeed were twins, but that I hope the little Stowes will love one another more than they did; adding that, as if to show the uni-

versal sinfulness of the human heart, a remarkable instance was given us in them, that even the proverbial love of twins for one another was insufficient to prevent one from over-reaching the other. To which Phillis, with a grunt, rejoins, "The young Stowes ha'n't got no birthright."

In the afternoon Phillis generally comes in, and we read the prayers, psalms, and lessons together; but sometimes Miss Secker drops in, and then Phillis and I defer our reading till the evening, unless she goes to church. Miss Secker brings a sermon with her, and sometimes I speculate a little, beforehand, whether it will be by Barrow, or Bishop Wilson, or Jeremy Taylor, or by Douglas Forsyth, or Melville, or Henry Vaughan of Crickhowel. We generally talk it over afterwards, and though our remarks may not be very original or deep, they refresh and animate me, being my only intellectual intercourse during the day.

Often our remarks make us turn to our Bibles to verify and illustrate them; which sometimes unexpectedly opens up a new subject fertile in interest. Thus, last Sunday, we lighted on that

wonderful statistical account of the ancient glory and wealth of Tyre, as vivid and minute as if the details were of yesterday:—how that its famous merchant-ships, the instruments of its mighty commerce, were built of deal from Senir, *i.e.* Mount Hermon, and their masts were of cedar from Lebanon, their oars of oak from Bashan, their benches of ivory from Chittim, their sails manufactured in Egypt, their awnings from the isles of Elishah; how that the mariners of these ships were from Sidon, their pilots picked men of Tyre, their caulkers the men of Gebal; and then the details of their armies, their merchants, their great fairs and markets, and the endless variety of merchandize brought to them from all parts of the civilised world. It gave us a great deal to think of:—and very likely it seemed as incredible to the Tyrians, that their proud city should ever become a mere desolate rock, on which the lonely fisherman should dry his nets, as it would to us that London should be reduced to its condition before the days of Julius Cæsar, when old King Lud changed its name from Trinovant to Lud-town.

Another time, finding that Nathanael was by

some eminent scholars supposed to be the same with the apostle Bartholomew, we hunted up all we could on the question; and came to the conclusion that, as he was supposed to be the son of Tholomai, or Ptolemy, Bartholomew, or Bartholomai, might be the surname given him by our Lord to signify the son of Tholomai; in like manner as he called Peter, Bar-jona, or the son of Jona. Questions of this sort will continually arise to interested readers of the Scriptures; for the more we search them, the more do little twinkling lights disclose themselves to us, reflecting light on one another.

I happened, unguardedly, to drop something about these pleasant readings to Miss Burt, when she put me into a sad fright by exclaiming, "Oh, *I'll* come and read to you some day!" for I did not like her reading, which is too much of the denunciatory sort. However, happily for me, she found it would not consist with her more important engagements; she therefore not only refrained, but took some pains to prevent Miss Secker from coming to me too, telling her that if she had any time to abstract from

her own devotional exercises between morning and evening services, she thought she might just as well devote it to some of the poor, who could neither read nor write, as on a friend who could do both, and had every comfort around her. However, Miss Secker did not see it exactly in the same light, and therefore has continued to drop in once every two or three weeks, to my great comfort and obligation. She rarely stays more than an hour; and when she does not come, Phillis and I have our little service together, and then I read or meditate in quiet till tea.

Mary Cole, a great favourite of Phillis's, then drops in to have tea in the kitchen, and take charge of the house while Phillis goes to church. I can't say Mary is quite as great a favourite of mine as she is of Phillis's; but that is no great matter, as she comes to see Phillis, not me. Thus, Phillis has a companion at both her Sabbath meals: it makes a little change for her, and prevents her hankering for more holidays than I can grant. And the visitors, neither of whom are capable of walking a second time to the distant church, get their meal and a little variety in

return for their charge. People of their rank are seldom much of readers, and it is well to give them a little sober intercourse in lieu of their falling asleep with their heads on the kitchen-table. To whom little is given, of them will less be required than of others more favoured.

Mary Cole, though a heavy girl, is gifted with a sweet voice and correct ear for music; and as she sits all alone, she beguiles the evening hours by singing hymns, often to my solace and delight. Sometimes it is my favourite "Wiltshire," sometimes "St. David's," another time the plaintive penitential psalm,

"From lowest depths of woe,"

to the rare old tune called Irish, which fills my eyes with quiet tears.

In that twilight hour known as "blind man's holiday," I lay this evening mentally colouring a picture of what I had just been reading, till it became distinct and real.

A desert place, all sand and stones, with scattered tombs hewn here and there in the rocks, or mere cairns heaped rudely over human remains, gleaming white and ghastly in the fitful moonlight. A single living figure, making night hideous by leaping among these tombs—wildly shrieking as the moon drifts through the clouds and casts strange shadows—yelling in ecstasy of fear, to the dismay of far-off travellers, who hasten on their journey in dread of they know not what. Can anything be more forlorn than the state of this poor wretch? His fellow men, at a loss how to treat him, bound him with strong chains, which he snapped in their faces, and then he fled. And now, unless indeed, some fellow-sufferer be glaring at him, silent and unseen, from among those tombs, he is alone—alone with his tormentors, for he feels possessed by myriads of evil spirits, whom he can no more cast out of his loathing *self*, than he can tear out his brain. If he can frame a connected thought, it is of despair.

But three little boats are crossing that surging lake, in the darkness of night. When they quitted the opposite shore, early in the evening, the waters

of that lake were still. The chief of the little company lay down wearily to rest, and fell asleep, with his head on a pillow. The others toiled at their oars, and looked anxiously about, as clouds gathered, winds rose, and the waves became high and rough, and threatened to engulf their little barks. The night wore on, and became more and more tempestuous; they were, seemingly, in great jeopardy: and all this peril and distress were being incurred that the Son of God might, unsought, go and heal that one poor man.

He recognises the Lord at once. "Oh!" he says, in anguish, "have you come to torment me before the time?" Torment you, poor man! oh, how little you know! You are possessed, you say, by a legion. Well, that legion shall, if you will, take visible possession of those two thousand swine feeding on the mountains—swine, which, they who keep shall deservedly lose, seeing that their own law prohibits them as unclean. There!—the real Master of those swine has driven them all, impetuously, into the sea: and *you—feel* yourself delivered. Ah, well you may fall at His feet, and look up to

Him so meekly, gratefully, and lovingly; well you may suffer yourself to be clothed by His compassionate disciples; and, while they who have lost their swine roughly desire Him to depart out of their coasts, well may you, fearing the evil ones may return unto you in His absence, and make you seven-fold worse, beseech Him to let you ever abide with Him. No safety, no sweetness, like that of being ever with Jesus.

But he mildly forbids, and charges you rather to go and declare to others what great things He has done for you; and you cheerfully, implicitly obey. Strange things have you to relate to those wondering friends and kinsfolk, who lately thought the best thing they could do, was to bind you with chains!

I have often thought how capitally I invested five shillings a few years ago, in two apple-trees, which I gave to two poor women living under the hill. One of the trees produced twelve fine apples

the second year; the year following, its owner sold a couple of bushels of the fruit. In a cottage full of hungry children, where meat is only tasted on Sundays, a good apple-pudding is no despicable hot dish on the noon-day board. Blackberries, of the children's gathering, sometimes make a savoury addition to it.

When my cook Hannah married and settled in a cottage of her own, I gave her a few roots of Myatt's Victoria rhubarb, and some round, white, American early potatoes, with enough onion-seed for a nice little square bed; a quart of peas, a quart of beans, a few early horn carrots, and a little parsley-seed; also pennyworths of canariensis, nasturtium, escolzia Californica, sweet-pea, candytuft, and red and white malope. Her husband immediately dug, raked, and planted the ground, and at once took to gardening after his day's work. I need not say they are a respectable couple. He cannot read; but she reads *The Leisure Hour* and *Sunday at Home* to him.

Though we had a February of almost unprecedented warmth, I am told the primrose is shyly and charily putting forth its blossoms. But soon

the warm banks will be gay with them, while the sweet wood-violet will betray itself by its fragrant breath at the roots of old trees. Among the earliest wayside productions is Jack-in-the-hedge, or sauce-alone; as ugly a Jack as one need wish to see, breathing odiously of garlic. Somewhat later, and rarer, is the perfoliate shepherd's-purse, with its miniature pouches, that remind one of the scrip wherein a young shepherd, who lived to be a king, put five smooth pebbles from the brook. Its leaves, as I lately showed the little Prouts, are perfoliate, that is to say, they look as though the stem runs *through* them—a very nice and singular distinction, never to be forgotten after being once seen. A fortnight hence I expect to hear the yellow celandine has made its appearance. Wordsworth, who has immortalized it, as much as a poet can immortalize a flower, says, at first his unaccustomed eye saw it nowhere; afterwards, he saw it everywhere.

If the month be genial, we shall, towards its close, see "God's hand-writing on the wall" of our gardens, in the opening buds and blossoms of our cherry-trees. Sheep are already turned out

on the fresh pasture-land: their bleatings and tinkling bells sound prettily. Here and there may be seen a bee, a small fly, a gnat: how soon shall we see the first butterfly?

Toads are curious creatures: there was one that used to sit watching Mr. Cheerlove at his gardening with its beautiful eyes, and sometimes climb a little way up the paling to have a better view. I suppose it varied the monotony of its life. 'Tis of no use to cart them away in a flower-pot; they will return from a considerable distance to their old quarters. If you hurt them, they will look at you very viciously—and why should they not? We have no call to molest the poor wretches; the world is wide enough for us all. Efts and newts are objectionable: they haunt old drains, dust-holes, and any damp, unaired corners. Moles loosen the soil, and make sad work sometimes with the roots of one's flowers; but yet, on the whole, they are found to do more good than harm. They make themselves subterranean galleries, and are very methodical, taking their walks at stated times. Hence it is very easy to trap them; but if you take one, you may take

two, for they are so affectionate that the mate is sure to follow the leader. Hence I always felt a sort of pang in having them destroyed, especially as they have such human-like little hands for paws; and I was glad to be told that the cruelty was unnecessary, and that their loosening the soil did it good, though it might injure particular plants. In moving a stack of firewood at Nutfield, we found underneath it a rat's nest, containing fifteen partridges' eggs. How did the rat convey them there? Did he roll them, or carry them on his fore-paws, walking on his hind legs?

The starry heavens are now very glorious. Jupiter, bright, untwinkling planet, is splendid to behold. There are many more stars to be seen to the east than to the north; no human being knows why. The naked eye beholds what are called stars of the sixth magnitude, whose light left their surfaces a hundred and forty years ago. It is very singular that numerous stars, beyond the range of any but a very powerful telescope, prove to be placed in *couples*: they are called *binary* stars. Before Sir William

Herschell's death, he had completed a list of three thousand three hundred double stars. His sister Caroline shared his watchings, and took down the result of his observations in writing.

My dear father gave me a taste for astronomy very early in life; and in later years I have found star-gazing to have a strangely calming effect under the pressure of great trouble. I have looked out on the star-lit sky during Eugenia's last illness, and after her death, till I felt every grief silenced, if not allayed, and every feeling steeped in submission. The stars make us feel so little! our lives so fleeting to a better world! our souls so near to God! O Cassiopeia, Andromeda, and Perseus, I owe to you many a consoling and elevating thought of your Maker!

My chimney does not smoke once in six months; but to-day, as ill-luck would have it, an unfortunate little puff came out in the presence of Miss Burt, who immediately declared that my chimney

wanted sweeping shockingly; and that if I did not immediately put the chimney-sweeper's services in requisition, I should not only be endangering my own life,—which I had no right to throw away,—but that of my servant, who would not particularly relish being burnt in her bed.

In vain I assured her that the chimney had not long been swept. Miss Burt talked me down, utterly deaf to the reminder that, being on the ground floor, we could easily walk out of the house in case of any disaster.

"As if *you* could walk out of the house!" cried Miss Burt, indignantly; and just then, Phillis coming in with coals, "Phillis," cried she, "have you any mind to be burnt in your bed?"

"I should think not, Miss Burt," replies Phillis, brisking up, and looking secure of some very entertaining rejoinder.

"You hear," says Miss Burt, nodding triumphantly at me.

"You may go, Phillis," said I, softly, which she did with some reluctance.

I was in nervous expectation of a fresh puff, when Miss Burt luckily found herself a new subject.

"There goes Miss Sidney!" said she. "How she does poke to be sure. Any one can see she has never had dancing-lessons. I think Mr. Sidney much to blame. By the way, Frank gave us an excellent sermon on Sunday. I wish you could have heard him."

"I wish I could," said I.

"Oh, I don't suppose you care much about it, as you had Miss Secker to read Jeremy Taylor. Doesn't she read through her nose?"

"Dear me, no!"

"Well, I should have expected it. Young people waste hours on their music now-a-days, but—commend me to a good reader."

"Then," said I, laughing, "I really can commend you to Miss Secker, or at any rate, honestly commend her to *you;* for her reading is neither too fast nor too slow, too loud nor too low; her voice is pleasant and her manner reverent."

"Ah, I like something *earnest.*"

"She is earnest too. What a favourite word that is now."

"Is it? Then I'll drop it! I hate words that are used up:—suggestive, sensuous, subjective, objective. Bad as Shakspere, taste, and the musical glasses!"

She started up, and was going to take leave, when she stopped short and said—

"What do you think that absurd man, Mr. Hitchin, has done? Painted his cypher on his wheel-barrow!"

"Well," said I, amused, "I cannot emulate him very closely, as I have no wheel-barrow, but I can put my crest on my watering-pot!"

She laughed rather grudgingly, and said, "I suppose you don't remember the tax on armorial bearings."

The chimney-sweeper has just called!—Miss Burt met him, and told him there would be no harm in his just looking in, to know if he were wanted!

Can April indeed be here? Yes, the blackbird wakes me at six o'clock, and the nightingale sings long after the sun has set.

The hedges are beginning to sprout, and the banks are decked with primroses and celandine.

> "Scant along the ridgy land,
> The beans their new-born ranks expand;
> The fresh-turned soil, with tender blades
> Thinly the sprouting barley shades."

So sings the sweet rural poet, Thomas Warton; of whom I suspect Harry Prout knows as little as of Waller.

Poor Mr. Prout is dead! the father of eight children. Yesterday morning, while it was yet dark, the turnpike-man heard a horse galloping furiously down the hill. On going down, he found the horse stopping at the gate, with Mr. Prout's foot dangling in the stirrup, and his bleeding body on the ground. His skull was fractured, and he was quite dead. He was praising his new, showy, chestnut horse to me

only a few days ago, and saying it was well worth a hundred guineas. It would have been worth a good many hundred guineas to his family had he not bought it. Poor Mr. Prout!

The turnpike-man's wife, it seems, immediately got up, assisted her husband to carry him in and lay him on their bed, and then washed his wounds; while the man, leading the vicious creature he was afraid to mount, came into the town to tell the news and get assistance. Poor Mrs. Prout and Harry were soon on the spot; Mr. Cecil soon followed. He and Mr. Prout were rivals, and rather cool to one another; but he looked very sorry as he hastened up the hill.

I cannot help constantly thinking of them all. Last night, I dreamt I saw Mr. Prout galloping up the hill, all in the dark, along the edge of that frightful chalk-pit, to the poor woman for whom he had been sent; and then coming home, thinking of his snug house and warm bed, when—off dashed the horse!

I have lost a kind doctor and friend; rich and poor deplore him, for he was sociable,

kind, and humane. Often in money difficulties, poor man; though I believe his good wife made every shilling go twice as far as most could. She always kept up appearances, too, so nicely! No finery, no waste; but everything (whatever poor Harry might think) suitable and appropriate.

Every one I have yet seen—not many, to be sure, but every one I *have* seen—expresses regret, and is eager to show sympathy, and wonders what the widow and children will do. Something for themselves, that is certain—except the little ones, who cannot. Mrs. Prout is hardly capable, I am afraid, of undertaking a school; or that would keep them all nicely together. Therefore, Emily and Margaret must go out as governesses or teachers; Harry must get a place in some office; something must be found for James; Edward must be put to school; and Fanny must make herself her mamma's little factotum, and look after the two youngest.

Easy to *say* "must" to all this!

What a change a few hours have made!

Harry has spent more than an hour with me this evening. I never saw a poor lad so overwhelmed with grief. He, the rosy-cheeked fellow! who would have you believe—in his verses—that his tears were his meat day and night, is now positively ashamed of crying bitterly over an irreparable loss. I honour him for so deeply lamenting a good father; it raises him in the scale of human being—as genuine, well-placed affection always does. He will now have to exchange imaginary woes for stern realities.

He came quite at dusk. I did not think, at first, it was his voice, asking if he might come in, it was so subdued. I said, "Ah, Harry!" and held out my hand. He grasped it in his, and then sat down and sobbed. I waited a little while in silence; then, when his emotion had somewhat spent itself, I said—

"I thank you very much for coming—it is very kind of you, for I was longing to hear many things that no one else could so well tell."

"Oh!" said he, drying his eyes, "the kindness is to myself—I could not stand it at home any longer!"

"How does your dear mother bear up?"

"Wonderfully!"—crying again. "But she quite broke down this evening: so my sisters persuaded her to go to bed; and as they are sitting with her, I was quite alone, and thought I would steal out to you for a little while. What a shocking thing it is!"

I knew to what he referred, and said, "It is indeed, my dear Harry. For your comfort, you must reflect that our heavenly Father is *peculiarly* the God of the widow and orphan. He makes them his *special* charge."

"I can't think what we shall do!"

"Do your best, my dear boy, and you will be sure to do well."

"Uncle John will come to the funeral. And Uncle John will very likely provide for James, and take him into his business, which is that of a wholesale druggist; but what is to become of *me*, I can't think!"

"Should you be glad if your uncle took you instead of James?"

"Why no, not glad; because it is not a line of business that suits my taste. You know, Mrs.

Cheerlove," said the poor boy, faltering, "I always aspired to be something of a gentleman."

"And is not your uncle one?"

"Hardly. But I would be anything just now, to be of service to mamma—my *mother!*"

"That's right. Perhaps you would like to be in a surveyor's office."

"That would be better—only, who is to place me in one?"

"Or should you like to be a medical man, like your father?"

"Ah, Mrs. Cheerlove, his was a hard life! And those hospitals! But have you heard of Mr. Pevensey's kindness?" cried he, suddenly brightening.

"No!—in what?"

"Directly he heard of what had happened, he sent my mother a note, to say how sorry he was; and that as he was sure she would be glad to part with the horse that had occasioned such a terrible calamity, and he heard my father valued it at a hundred guineas, he inclosed a cheque for that amount, and would take it off her hands."

"Excellent!" said I. "So opportune! so kindly thought of! And this is the man whom so many think churlish!"

"Ah, he's anything but that," said Harry; "and quite the gentleman. Of course mamma—my mother, I mean—was glad to get rid of the brute, and would have been so for half the money. How strange it seems! Only three days ago, my father was patting and praising that animal, and calling him 'Hotspur,' little thinking he should so soon be laid low! What an awful thing sudden death is, Mrs. Cheerlove!—*here* one minute, and the next in the presence of God!"

"Are we not in His presence *now*, Harry? We cannot see Him, but He sees and hears us. If a person is well prepared, a sudden death is, in my opinion, a great mercy."

"Oh, how *can* you think so!"

"Well, I do. The shock is very great, doubtless, to the survivors; but the sufferer is mercifully spared a great deal of painful discipline: and if he be but about his Master's work, 'Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.'"

"My father was about his Master's work, Mrs. Cheerlove."

"Certainly he was. He was visiting the sick and needy, in the exercise of his profession. It could never have been without self-denial that he turned out of his bed into the dark, cold night, on such an errand, whether to rich or poor."

Harry seemed to dwell on the reflection with comfort; and I rang for tea, and gave him a cup that was both hot and strong, which I knew to be good for his poor aching head. We had a long talk afterwards, and he left me in a composed and chastened frame of mind. Certainly, a sudden death, like Mr. Prout's, may be called a leap in the dark; but the believer *leaps into his Saviour's arms.*

This morning, to my great surprise and pleasure, Mrs. Pevensey came in, bright with smiles, and said, "The weather is most lovely! and you know you always promised that I should take you your first drive. It shall be as short as you like; but, if you feel equal to the effort, you

cannot have a better opportunity. And as I am just going on to inquire after poor Mrs. Prout, I will take you up on my return, which will give you time to get ready without hurry."

I felt quite bewildered, for I had not been out for more than two years! If I had had time, I believe I should have said "No," but as I had not, I said "Yes," and very thankfully too. All my nervous misgivings about over-exertion and painful consequences were lost sight of in the thought, how delightful it would be to breathe once more the sweet, sweet open air!

Phillis *did* stare when she heard of the projected attempt. I think her surprise vented itself in the ejaculation—

"Well, I'm sure!——"

But there was no time to say more, for there was a grand hunt to make for carriage-boots, and warm shawls, and gloves, and a certain bonnet that would unquestionably require all Mrs. Pevensey's self-command not to laugh at—it was so sadly out of date. She *did* give it one amused look, but that was all; for she is kindness itself, and has too much real wit to depend

for it on personal ridicules. She knew she had taken me by surprise, and must make allowances. So, having triumphantly got me into her most easy of close carriages—

"Where shall we go?" said she.

"Oh," said I, "the turnpike will be *quite* far enough."

"Very well. Then, to the turnpike, George," said she, as the footman shut us in. But the roguish woman must have glanced, I am sure, to the left instead of to the right, as she spoke; for the coachman, doubtless taking his instructions from George, drove us to the farthest turnpike instead of the nearest.

Well, it was very pleasant! I had been so long pent up, that

> "The common air, the earth, the skies,
> To me were opening Paradise."

We are nearly through April; and the hedges are quite green, though the oaks, ashes, and beeches are still leafless, and the meadows are not yet sprinkled with buttercups. But the blackthorn is in full flower. Besides, a great many alterations had been effected since I was

last out, which I noticed with surprise and interest; for though hearing of alterations is one thing, seeing them is quite another. My old favourite promenade, the elm-tree walk (sometimes called the Queen's Walk, though the queen's name I never could ascertain), was as yet unharmed amid the rage for letting ground on building leases to freehold-land societies; but, beyond it, new houses had sprung up in various directions. When I first came to live in the neighbourhood of Elmsford, there were only four houses between me and the town; and having for some few years been accustomed to live in a street, I used occasionally, on dark nights, to feel rather unprotected. If a dog barked at the moon, I used to think of thieves, and remember that some suspicious-looking man had begged at the door; or I thought of fire, and ruefully considered the scarcity of water. Besides, where were we to get help?—Why, in *heaven,* where I may ask for it at once, thought I, and for freedom from all disquieting alarms. So I used to seek it, and then yield to the quiet, dreamless sleep that was *sent*.

Now, in place of four houses, I saw a dozen, with stone porticoes to the doors and heavy architraves to the windows, and very little green about them higher than three-foot laurels, which the cows had evidently nibbled, as they do mine, on their way to and from milking.

At one of these houses we stopped, while the footman carried a beautiful basket of hothouse flowers to the door, and delivered a message. While we waited, I heard the sound of a harp, and listened to it with pleasure.

"How pretty!" said I.

"Ah, you may well say so," said Mrs. Pevensey, with a sigh. "The player is soothing a much afflicted father, who, in his day, was an accomplished musician, and a man of fine intellectual taste. I shall take her a drive to-morrow; it will make a little change for her, which is better than none. 'He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.'" *

A door or two off, we left a little flat round basket, containing about two dozen large hothouse strawberries—scarlet, ripe, and tempting,

* Ecclesiasticus xix. 1.

as they peered out of their coverlet of dark green leaves. Several such little baskets had, during two or three springs, found their way to *me*.

"That is for poor Miss Peach, who is dying of consumption," said Mrs. Pevensey. "Arbell set them out so nicely. My dear Mrs. Cheerlove, whatever you said to Arbell the other day, has had magic effect! She has been quite a different girl ever since!"

"That is more to her praise than mine," said I. "What I said was very little."

"All the better, perhaps, since it was to the purpose. She is now brisk, pleasant, and active—has found her way out of dreamland into the affairs of daily life. Mademoiselle is highly satisfied with her; and Mr. Pevensey, finding she was writing a little summary of Italian middle-age history for her own amusement, was so pleased at it, that he told her he would give her five sovereigns, if she did it well by Christmas. So she is carrying it on with double spirit, ransacking the library for materials about the Guelfs and Ghibelins, the Neri and Bianchi, instead of moping; and is glad to refresh herself

afterwards with a good wholesome game of play with Rosaline and Floretta."

"Ah, a golden spur sometimes pricks the best," said I. "Small premiums for small achievements are better than competitions for a prize, which *must* disappoint one or many. A rivalry with one's self is the only safe rivalry."

"I think so too. And five pounds is nothing, you know, to Mr. Pevensey."

"No, but a hundred pounds may be more so. Harry Prout gratefully told me of his buying the horse."

"Mr. Prout had over-estimated it," said she, quietly smiling.

"I guessed as much."

"In fact, if it cannot be thoroughly broken, by Rarey's means or others, Mr. Pevensey will have it shot; for he says it is better a showy horse should be killed, than another father of a family."

"Surely."

"And the money, you see, won't be wasted, because it was useful where it was sent. There is some thought of quietly getting up a subscription, under the name of a testimonial. Mr.

Secker, the suggestor, will acquaint Mrs. Prout with it, and ask whether she would like a silver cup or the money; and of course she will prefer the latter. Only half-sovereigns will be asked, but those who like to give more may do so unknown to all but Mr. Secker, as there will be no published subscription list."

"All the better," said I. "There are too few who—

"'Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.'"

"More than you think, though, perhaps. There!—now you get a glimpse of the church. Your next wish will be to be in it; but you must not attempt too much at first. In a little while, I hope you may manage it."

Having nearly reached the turnpike, we turned about on our homeward course. And thus ended my pleasant drive. Had I had my choice, my frame of mind would have been serious; as it was, it was cheerful. I felt tired and shaken, but less so than I expected. On saying so to Phillis, she remarked—

"Said so—didn't I? My 'pinion is, if you'd gone afore, it never would have hurted ye."

Kind words cost little: and I had *had* a good many. I could not help thinking, had Eugenia been alive, how she would have sped me forth with fond solicitude, and tenderly hailed my return!—with some word of thankfulness, too, to Him in whose hand are the issues of life and death—some cheery gratulation that we were to be spared yet a little longer to each other.

But I called to mind the substance of a nice little tract called "The Scales Adjusted." Things are often equalized by roughs and smooths being set against one another. And, though snubbed by my maid, I felt that in this instance my good things predominated.

"So you've been and seen them big stone houses at last!" said Phillis, as she wheeled my little tea-table up to my easy-chair. "They *do* make ours look small, don't they?"

Now this was a very disagreeable view of the subject. Of course, a little house *does* look smaller than a large one, turn it which way you

will; but mine—Whiterose Cottage—was quite large enough for me, and could not be turned in a prettier direction. As we lost sight of the tall, shapeless stone houses, and came first to the graceful elm avenue, and then to—

> "Where my cottage-chimney smokes,
> Fast between two aged oaks,"

I could not help thinking how snug and suitable for its mistress it looked.

True, it has only one sitting-room, save a little snuggery eight feet by ten; true, it is all built on one floor, and that on the ground: every room in it, but the first and last, opening into a narrow matted passage, or gallery. But to me this seems the very prettiest, most convenient plan, for a single woman with one servant, that could possibly be desired; and my only wonder is, that instead of there not being such another, perhaps, in England, there are not dozens, or hundreds. How many a rich man, now, might run up a little place like this, on some corner of his estate, for a widowed aunt, or old maiden sister or cousin, where she might be

as happy as the day is long, and live on next to nothing, quite respectably; and, when she dropped off, like a ripe acorn from the oak, and almost as noiselessly, the "Old Maid's Home" might revert in perpetuity to a succession of decayed gentlewomen, whose simple, yet genteel tastes would thereby be met by their modest means.

Not that I would have them *called* old maids' homes, for that would stamp them at once, like a workhouse woollen waistcoat, or a charity cloth cloak. No; they should be Sweet Homes, or have other such pretty significatives; giving them rank with the best Rose Cottages, Myrtle Cottages, and Laurel Cottages, in the land. They might prettily be called after their fair owners—Julia's Cottage, Maria's Cottage, Helen's Cottage, and so forth. Mine is Whiterose Cottage. It has not an exterior like a long, narrow knife-tray, or candle-box: on the contrary, though its rooms lie parallel, they are not of an uniform width or length; consequently, the walls have what Mary Russell Mitford called "a charming in-and-outness;" and there is not a straight line or "coign of vantage," that is not draped by some

gay or graceful climbing plant—rose, jessamine, lophospermum scandens, morandia Barclayana, ecremocarpus, nasturtium, and callistegia, or Romeo's ladder.

The dwelling was built by a retired tradesman of good taste, and some originality as well as education. He was a widower, without children, determined to have everything comfortable for his old housekeeper as well as himself—consequently, the kitchen, though small, is as complete in all its appointments, as can possibly be wished; with water laid on, and a little oven in the kitchen-range—in which, as the furnishing ironmonger triumphantly says, you may bake a pie, a pudding, and a pig. Phillis, I believe, enjoys her kitchen quite as much as I do my parlour. Kitchen and parlour stand sentries, as it were, at each end of the house. There is hardly a hall worth speaking of—only a little vestibule built on, that will just hold a mat, a flower-stand, a hall-chair, and an umbrella-stand. Over the threshold, the quaint old man has carved "PARVA, SED APTA," which, I am sure, is true enough. And on one of the panes of

the high lattice-window, with its eight compartments, in the parlour, is written with a diamond ring—

> "True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise."

On another, "Know Thyself." The good man, though much respected, was accounted rather crotchety—and, perhaps, I am so too; for, certainly, I no sooner saw these little whimseys, than I took a fancy to the place, and was quite thankful to find the rent within my means. It was not till I had taken it, that I remembered (towards night) the possibility of alarms from thieves and sturdy beggars. A kind friend suggested a fierce dog; but, to confess the truth, I am also much afraid of fierce dogs. So then, the same kind friend suggested a kennel without the dog, a man's hat hung up in the hall, and a large bell—adding, that, with these defences, I must be safe. I trusted I might be so, even without them. So here I am thus far in safety. And often, as I lean back to rest towards sunset, letting harmless fancies have their course, I picture to myself the old recluse, seated, like brave

Miles Standish, with his Cæsar's "Commentaries," at the lattice, poring over some huge old book—Bunyan's "Holy War," suppose—

> "Turning the well-worn leaves, where thumb-marks, thick
> on the margin,
> Like the trample of feet, proclaimed where the battle was
> hottest."

"As well be out of the world as out of the fashion," said our amusing friend Captain Pinkney; and, accordingly, I sent this morning for little Miss Campanelle, to hold counsel with her about a new bonnet. Mrs. Pevensey took me by surprise, and therefore made allowances; but she will not take me by surprise next time, and therefore I must not expect her to make allowances again. We owe it to our richer friends not to neglect appearances consistent with our means; on the other hand, the rich do us more harm than they perhaps are aware of, when they avow a contempt for such moderate efforts to keep pace with the times as we ought not to exceed.

My bonnet was decidedly behind the times.

"Dear me, ma'am," said Miss Campanelle, primming up her little rosebud mouth, which showed a strong inclination to expand into a laugh, "there is enough in this bonnet for *two.* Only, the shape is so completely out of date, that it won't bear altering: otherwise the materials are quite fresh."

"They may well be," said I, "for they were nearly new when I put them away two years ago. However, I mean to have a new bonnet; and I dare say I shall find some one who will be glad to have this."

"Dear me, yes, ma'am; it will be quite a nice present," said Miss Campanelle, hastily. "There are many people who would be glad to modernize it for themselves."

Then, thought I to myself, why could not you modernize it for *me?* Perhaps she read my thought in my face, for she added—

"There are some people who do not at all mind style, if they are but respectable. Now, respectability depends upon the material; but style on the making it up. And it's style that shows the lady."

"Yes," said I; "one style shows the old lady, and one the young lady; one the fashionable lady, and one the lady who does not care for the fashion. It does not seem to me so very many years ago since bonnets were worn so large that it was considered a very severe, but not extravagant, remark, when some one said of another,

"'And all her soul is in her hat—
Quite large enough to hold it.'"

"Ah," said Miss Campanelle, "that must have been before my time." And, as she still seemed inclined to ruminate on the future of my bonnet, I nearly committed the unpardonable folly of asking her whether she could make any use of it herself. Instead of which, I very fortunately began by asking her whether she knew of any one who would be glad of it.

"Why, since you are kind enough to ask me, ma'am," said she, quickly, "I *do* happen to know of some one for whom it would be the very thing. Some one *very* respectable, and very poorly off,—a widow, but no longer wearing widow's mourning; only black, ma'am, like you,—who seems quite

overlooked, because she's below the genteel, and yet no one can class her among the poor—her manners are above that; but yet I do assure you, she often dines on bread-and-butter."

It appeared she was the widow of a pianoforte-tuner, who lodged with Miss Campanelle; and as I feared it might hurt her to receive the bonnet from myself, I gave it to Miss Campanelle to give it in her own person to her, which she was quite pleased to do. And she went away with the *Illustrated News* and some black-currant jam for herself.

The funeral is over. The house is re-opened, and the little mourners go about the streets; while their widowed mother must do many things besides sit at home and weep, for she has to provide for their future and her own. Mr. John Prout is going to take James, and get Edward into Christ's Hospital. How strange the little flaxen-headed fellow will look in his blue gown and yellow stockings! I hope his round cheeks will not lose their fresh, rosy colour in London.

The subscription will enable Mrs. Prout to article Harry, and leave her something over. How much better than spending it on a silver cup or vase, for which she would have no use! She hopes some one will buy the goodwill of her husband's business, and take the house, and perhaps furniture, off her hands; otherwise there must be a sale. At any rate, she must find cheaper quarters. Mr. John Prout proposed her going to live cheaply in Yorkshire, with little Arthur and Alice, while the two elder girls went into situations; but she naturally shrank from going so far from them. Mr. Prout insured his life for a small sum, so that she is not utterly destitute. I understand there is a pretty little row of houses called Constantine Place, newly built at the other end of the town, and that one is still vacant, and thought to be just the size that will now suit Mrs. Prout.

Well—I have been to church once more!—on a week-day, not on a Sunday; but I am deeply thankful for it. I went slowly crawling along in the donkey-chair, the wheels of which would have creaked less had they received a not very expensive greasing with a little dripping. The ride shook me a good deal, and the boy kept worrying the donkey with a little stick that did no good, and only made it obstinate. They who would quicken a donkey's paces must observe the law of judicious kindness. I felt rather bewildered and scant of breath when I was in church: there were not a dozen persons in it, and the few voices sounded faint and hollow. I was hardly capable of more than a general emotion of thankfulness; but the service was very short; and by waiting till every one else had left the church, I escaped salutations.

——Miss Burt has just looked in.

"*I* saw you!" said she. "You need not think to creep into any corner where *I* shall not spy you out! Well, I congratulate you with all my heart; and I hope that now you have once begun, you will keep it up. Nothing worth doing, is to

be done without a little effort; and if *I* were never to go out but when I felt inclined, I might stay at home all my life. Of course you saw the memorial window?"

"No, I did not look about—"

"Not see the window! Why, it was immediately in front of you! You could not have helped seeing it!"

"Then of course I did see it; but I did not observe it."

"My mother taught me at a very early age," said Miss Burt dryly, "to observe *everything*. So that now I never go into a church, or room, or pantry, without seeing everything in it at a glance—and remembering it too. It is a faculty that may be acquired: and therefore should be. This was the way in which Robert Houdin taught his son to exhibit what passed for second-sight. He used to take the child up to a shop-window—the next minute take him away. 'Now, Robert, what did you see?'—'Two work-baskets, ten penwipers, six whizzgigs.'—'No, you didn't.'—'Yes, I did.'—They go back again. The child proves right. The boy, by cultivating the

faculty, had become quicker than his father. He took in at a glance the whole contents of a shop. And applied this habit so dextrously before a crowded audience, that things which they did not believe he saw, or had seen, he described accurately. The consequence was, that his father realized immense profits."

She paused to take breath.

"I think, however," said I, "that there are times when such a faculty may be supposed to lie dormant."

"No, never. It becomes intuition."

"I think there are times when feeling takes the place of observation."

"Oh, if you're getting metaphysical, I've done with you! Never *would* dabble in metaphysics! When people begin to talk of their feelings—"

"I was not going to talk of my feelings," said I, with a tear in my eye.

"Fine feeling and I shook hands long ago," said Miss Burt, rapidly. "Deep feeling is quite another thing; and does not betray itself in words. Deep feeling leads to action—fine feeling

to inaction; deep feeling is excited for others—fine feeling thinks of itself; deep feeling says,

> "'Life is real, life is earnest'—

fine feeling is ready to lie down and die; deep feeling is a fine, manly fellow—fine feeling is a poor, puling creature."

"Very good," said I, hardly knowing whether to laugh or cry; for it really was clever, only I knew it was all meant for a hit at myself.

"Very good, only you won't let it do you good, hey?" said Miss Burt. "'Excellent soup for the poor.' You think the cap would fit Mrs. A. or Mrs. B. very well."

"No, I was not thinking of Mrs. A., B., or C."

"You were not, were you, *Mrs. C.?*" laughing. "No; that's just what I thought.

> "'General observation,
> Without self-application,'

does little good that I know of. *My* plan always is to take a thing home."

"But, my dear Miss Burt, I laid no claim to deep feeling, that I can remember; and surely

you have hardly cause to charge me so *very* plainly with fine feeling."

"Now don't get warm! There's nothing that hurts me so much as to see anything I have meant kindly, taken quite amiss. *Do* keep your temper. I assure you I came into this house prepared for nothing but kind words."

"And I am sure I have spoken no unkind ones," said I, the tears rolling down my cheeks.

"Now you've upset yourself. This church-going has been too much for you. Why didn't you lie down the minute you came in?"

"I was going to do so, but——"

"Why didn't you lie down? You should have lain down directly. Phillis should have *made* you do so, and then have brought you a glass of jelly, or a little good broth. Phillis was to blame for not having it all ready for you against your return, without your knowing anything about it. I shall speak to her."

"Oh, pray don't! Phillis's place is to obey orders, and not to prepare surprises. Surely I can direct her what I shall like her to prepare, myself."

"You are now making a matter of temper of it. I shall say not a word. I am quite calm, but I feel I'd better go. If anything *does* make me feel irritable, it is to see . . . . Well, well, I will look in another time, when I hope we shall be in better tune. I'm sure I had not an idea! — Good-by; good-by!"

As soon as I heard the little gate slam, I had a hearty cry. Mr. Cheerlove used to speak of people making a storm in a saucer, and surely this had been one, if ever there was such a thing.

On first coming in, my intention had been to lie down and rest quietly till Phillis brought me a little arrow-root; but I had scarcely untied my bonnet-strings when Miss Burt came in. *Had* I had time to recover myself, I should not have been so weak as to let her upset me; but, as the matter stood, she had done so completely, and I felt utterly unable to resist shedding tears.

"Don't come in, Phillis," said I, hastily, as she opened the door; for I thought I should have some observations, silent ones at any rate, on my red eyes.

"Here's Mr. Sidney," said Phillis.

I looked up, quite ashamed. Kind Mr. Sidney it was, who had, like Miss Burt, seen me in church, but who had come to congratulate me in a very different manner.

"I am afraid you have done rather too much this morning," said he, very kindly. "I am not at all surprised to see you rather overcome. It is a good way from this house to the church; and I dare say the donkey-chair shook you a good deal. I wish there were an easier one to be had. My aunt uses it sometimes, and says it shakes her to pieces. Well, but my dear Mrs. Cheerlove, this is a great step gained. I am sure we all have great reason to be thankful that it has pleased the Lord to restore you to us. You have a great deal of ground yet to gain, I can readily believe, before you are quite one of *us*; but still, every step in advance is a mercy."

He appeared not to notice my tears, and, though they still forced their way, they had lost their bitterness.

"I went home," continued he, "and said to my wife, 'Mrs. Cheerlove was in church this

morning; I shall step down and wish her joy:' and I put this little book in my pocket to read you a few lines, which I thought you would enter into. What I like myself, I can't help expecting others to like;—others, I mean, in whom exists some similarity of taste and feeling. You know I have known what it is to be brought very close to an unseen world, and to have been raised up again quite contrary to all expectation; and, therefore, I can sympathise very truly with you."

"You had so many things to make life dear," said I, dejectedly, "and so many depending on you in your family and parish, that your death would have been a very heavy misfortune; but I have not one near tie left! My work, which was never very important, seems done; and I am, in fact, little more now than a cumberer of the ground. I therefore cannot feel quite as thankful perhaps, for recovery as I ought."

"That proceeds," replied he, quietly, "from rather a morbid state of feeling, which is not at all natural to you, and which will in a great measure pass off with your present exhaustion. But

nevertheless, I can quite understand that a Christian believer, brought very close to the threshold of God's kingdom,—so as almost to hear the voices on the other side the door, and very sincerely desirous to enter His awful presence, under the assured protection of the Redeemer,—*may* feel a kind of disappointment at being sent back again into this wilderness-world—just as the Israelites were when they were on the very confines of the promised land. But all we have to do in such case is *to submit*, and *to trust;* and I think this little hymn very experimentally teaches us our duty." Then, in a very feeling, calming voice, he read :—

"'It is thy will, my Lord, my God!—
And I, whose feet so lately trod
The margin of the tomb,
Must now retrace my weary way,
And in this land of exile stay,
Far from my heavenly home.

"'It is thy will!—And this, to me,
A check to every thought shall be,
Which each might dare rebel.
Those sacred words contain a balm,
Each sad regret to soothe and calm,
Each murmuring thought to quell.

"'It is thy will!—And now anew,
Let me my earthly path pursue,
With one determined aim;
To thee to consecrate each power,
To thee to dedicate each hour,
And glorify thy name.

"'It is thy will!—I ask no more;
Yet, if I cast toward that bright shore
A longing, tearful eye,
It is because, when landed there,
Sin will no more my heart ensnare,
Nor Satan e'er draw nigh.' *

Do you like it?"

"Oh yes! very much."

"Carry shall copy it for you then. This little volume is my *vade mecum*. You may always find my Bible in my right pocket, and this in my left. It is rather too dear for the poor, which I regret; but its circulation is already very extensive."

I found that it was the "Invalid's Hymn-book," and that my favourite Sabbath hymn, which I had erroneously attributed to Hugh White, was, as well as this, by Miss Elliott.

* These hymns have been inserted by the kind permission of the publisher of "The Invalid's Hymn-book."

"Will you let me offer you a glass of wine?" said I.

"Thank you, I shall like a glass of wine-and-water and a biscuit very much, if you will have the same."

"I will, then."

I believe it was partly on my account he had it. As we partook of our refreshment, he spoke so pleasantly and interestingly, that I was completely lured away from all my sad thoughts; and, after offering up a short, fervent prayer, which was full of tempered thanksgiving for life, and faith in the life to come, he left me quite composed and cheerful. And here have I been living the happy half-hour over again.

I must just note down something else that he said to me.

"I sometimes hear people," said he, "deplore their living in vain. No one lives in vain who does or bears the will of God. Where there is little or nothing to perform, there may be something to endure. A baby can do nothing, and is only the object of solicitude to others, but I suppose no one with any sense or feeling will say

that babies live in vain. Even if they answer no other purpose, they are highly useful in creating sympathy, watchfulness, and unselfishness in others. A paralyzed person, a person shut up in a dark cell, may, by patient endurance, eminently glorify God. And, as long as He thinks it worth while we should live, we may always find it worth while to fulfil the purposes of living in things however small. Only the bad, the slothful, the selfish, live in vain. We may have our good and evil tempers without speaking a word. We may nourish holy or unholy wishes, contented or discontented dispositions, without stirring from our place. 'Since trifles make the sum of human things,' even a bit of liquorice given to a servant-girl with an irritable throat, going out in a cutting wind, shall not be in vain.

"No one can say, my dear Mrs. Cheerlove, that that good and great man, Sir Isambard Brunel, lived in vain. Towards the close of his life, however, days of weakness and helplessness supervened, when he was drawn about his son's garden in a Bath chair, on sunshiny mornings. Well, Lady Brunel told me that on those occa-

sions he would often bid them bring him one of his favourite blue and white minor convolvuluses, and he would then examine it with his magnifying glass, till he espied the minute black insect which he was sure to find in it, soon or late. 'See here,' he would exclaim, 'this little creature is so small as scarcely to be discernible, and yet the Almighty has thought it worth while to give it every function requisite for life and happiness.' He did not think it lived in vain."

Harry has had tea with me for the last time, though he does not go to London till the day after to-morrow. We have promised to correspond, which, I saw, pleased him; for, poor boy, he feels very homesick, now that he is actually going, and will be glad of any little glimpse of his family that I can give. I said, "How is it that you, who thought anything better than your monotonous life, are now sorry to leave home?"

"Ah! what can be more monotonous than a solitary lodging will be!" cried Harry.

"But the romping of noisy children—the crying baby—"

"Don't name them, please! I see now, they are not worthy to be named."

—"Are destructive of the repose needful for literary composition," said I, rather mischievously. "Then, Margaret's daily practising—the surgery bell—"

"Will be sounds by distance made more sweet," interrupted he. "Pray, Mrs. Cheerlove, have you ever taken the trouble to—ever found leisure to—dip into the little manuscript volume of poems I placed in your hands before our unhappy loss?"

Instead of giving him a straightforward answer, I opened a small book beside me, and read:—

"'In broad daylight and at noon,
Yesterday I saw the moon
Sailing high, but faint and white
As a schoolboy's paper kite.

"'In broad daylight yesterday
I read a poet's mystic lay;
And it seemed to me, at most,
As a phantom or a ghost.'"

"Oh horrible, horrible!" cried Harry. "So then you think my verses poor and unreal? Not fire enough? or what—what is it?"

"Pause, and hear me," continued I, reading on:—

> "'But, at length, the feverish day
> Like a passion passed away;
> And the night, serene and pale,
> Fell on village, hill, and vale.
>
> "'Then the moon, in all her pride,
> Like a spirit glorified,
> Filled and overflowed the night
> With revelations of her light.
>
> "'And the poet's song again
> Passed like music through my brain:
> Night interpreted to me
> All its grace and mystery.'"

"Did it?—did it?" cried he.

"Well, in some degree it did. I read them by daylight, when I confess I thought your time might have been better spent in almost any harmless thing than in writing them. After tea I remembered how many of my own young attempts, of one sort and another, had demanded far more indulgence. So then I read them again, and not

only liked them better, but liked some of them very well—very much. I do not think, however, that your verses will *sell*. Here, now, is a stanza you must explain to me:—

> " 'Overcome with trouble deep,
> Rest, too restless to be sleep,
> While these sorrows did combine,
> An angel's face looked into mine.'

Now, what did you mean by that?"

"That I shall never divulge," said Harry, folding his arms.

"Oh, very well, then. If you only half confide to me and to the public a secret that is never to be divulged, we may as well know nothing about it."

"There is a very solemn meaning underneath," said he, gravely.

"There *may* be," said I, after pondering over it a little. And a vision floated before me of poor orphaned Harry crying himself almost to sleep, and then suddenly becoming aware that his mother was bending over him with looks of love. "The next verse," said I, "I tell you frankly, Harry, I like very much:—

"'Oh! if my griefs their hold forsook,
But at an angel's passing look,
Saviour, how great the joy must be,
Always of beholding thee!'

Yes, Harry, that is very sweet — very nicely thought and worded. Go on amusing yourself, my dear boy, at leisure moments, only don't let it interfere with the real business of life. Sir Walter Scott said, 'Literature was a good stick, but a bad staff.' Remember that our four greatest poets, Chaucer, Shakspere, Spenser, and Milton, were all practical men; and would never have written in their masterly way if they had been otherwise. And don't get into the way, Harry, of writing far into the night; it robs the morrow—nay, it robs many morrows. There are young men who like the reputation of being great readers, writers, and thinkers, who boast of keeping themselves awake to study by drinking strong coffee, tying wet towels round their heads, and other silly things. In the first place, I do not quite believe them; in the second, I always feel a little contempt for boasters: and even supposing they neither boast nor exagge-

rate, they burn the candle at both ends, and it wastes all the faster. Rise as early as you will, it does no harm to the health nor the head; but remember Sir Walter Scott. As long as he rose at five, lighted his own fire, and wrote before breakfast, he could devote the chief part of the day to his other affairs, and the whole evening to relaxation in his family. As long as he did that, all went well with him. But when, with a laudable desire to pay off debts,—which, after all, he could not pay,—he wrote, hour after hour, all day long, and by gas-light, nearly all night too, human nature could not stand it; his mind, already overwrought by heavy afflictions and perplexing difficulties, gave way under the too great pressure he put upon it in its state of extreme tension. The consequence was, his powers of usefulness ceased — his magician's wand was broken!"

"Poor man!" said Harry, after a little pause. "No, I'll never overdo myself like that; and yet, Mrs. Cheerlove, there's something grand, too, in dying at one's post."

"Very grand and very glorious in many cases;

only, if you exhaust yourself at the beginning of the race, you won't reach the goal, or win the prize, which otherwise you might have reasonable hopes of. And, to be *useful*, you must not despise commonly prudent precautions. By the way, would you like an admission to the reading-room in the British Museum?"

"Oh, very much! You know I shall be quite near it."

"Well, I think I can get you one. Perhaps you would like to know a nice old lady and her daughter, who live in a quiet street hard by?"

"Dear me, yes—exceedingly! You know, I don't know a soul."

"Their name is Welsh. They are not smart people, but the mother is very kind, and the daughter, who is some years older than yourself, intelligent and intellectual. If you like one another (which I see no reason to doubt), I think your dropping in on them now and then, just as you drop in here, to tea, would be taken kindly."

"I am sure it would be a kindness to myself," said Harry, brightening. And he took down their

address in a little pocket-book, that his sister Emily had given him as a keep-sake; and I promised to write to Mrs. Welsh, and prepare her to expect him.

"I know a clever artist, too," said I; "a sensible, friendly man, with a nice little wife. They, also, are quiet people; but yet they sometimes receive, beneath their unassuming roof, noteworthy persons, whom one would like to have a glimpse of."

"Why, Mrs. Cheerlove, that promises still better than the other! Will you write to them too?"

"I will, Harry. And now I believe you know the extent of what little I can do for you."

"I call it much, not little," said he, gratefully; and the rest of our conversation was very cheerful.

I have had a small tea-party, of very small people—their ages ranging from five to twelve. Two Hopes, two Bretts, and three Honeys. I took Mary Brett into my confidence, and gave her half-a-crown to lay out to the best advantage for

the tea-table; and it was astonishing to see the variety of little paper bags she brought back. This having been *her* treat, Louisa Hope's was that of being tea-maker, in which she acquitted herself admirably. All talked at once; and, as I had expected as much, I was very glad no grown-up person was present to compel a check to it, for it was not of the smallest annoyance to myself.

After tea, I proposed that Mary Brett should be blindfolded, and put in the corner, while Phillis cleared the table, and then, still blindfolded, come forth and tell us a fable of her own making. The idea was applauded; and the fable was a very fair one, to this effect:—

"A cuckoo, observing a thrush busy making her nest, contemptuously remarked—'It is easy enough to stick a few bits of wool and straw together in that way.'—'It may be very easy for you to *say* so,' replied the thrush, after dropping a dead leaf from her beak, 'but if you were industrious enough to try yourself, instead of using other people's nests, you would find the difference.'

" '*Moral.*—People who have never made a book, a fable, or shirt, or anything, don't know how hard it is till they have tried.' "

Helen Brett, fired with the desire of emulation, immediately declared *she* would make the next; but I made them all file in silence round Mary, who, touched by each in turn, said—" Not you," —" Not you,"—" Not you;" and at length— " *You* shall be the next," catching little Gertrude by the wrist.

Gertrude's effusion was about as witless as might have been expected. " A bear—no, a tiger,—no, a bear met a lion one day, and said— 'What are you going to have for dinner?' The lion said—the lion said—O dear, I don't know what he said!"

This produced shouts of derisive laughter, and Gertrude was doomed to forfeit. Then the others took their turns, with various success; after which, the forfeits were cried. Then we had " The Knight of the Whistle." I produced a penny whistle, and, blowing a pretty shrill blast, put Willy Hope in the middle of the room, and told him he was to find out who blew the whistle.

The children ran round him, blowing the whistle, he running sometimes after one, sometimes after another, never able to find it;—for a very good reason, because very early in the game, it had been pinned by a long string to the back of his own little tunic.

Then I reclaimed the whistle, and again blowing a loud blast, said to Willy, "See if you can do like that;" but dropped it on the carpet, and affecting to pick it up, produced another, which, the moment he blew it with all his might, sprinkled his face all over with flour.

Of course, these tricks did not bear being repeated. Moreover, I could perceive Louisa Hope was thinking—"All this may not be too childish for *you*, but it is for *me*." So I said—"Now then, Louisa, write something on a piece of paper, and take care I do not see what you write." She looked surprised, but immediately complied. "Fold it up very small," said I. "Hold it to the right,—what are you afraid of? Stretch your arm straight out, it won't hurt you! Now to the left. Now towards the ceiling. Now towards the floor. Now put it *on* the floor, and

place on it a candlestick, a box, or *anything* that will completely cover it." All this took up some time; and she became a little excited, while the younger ones were intensely interested.

"Nay," said I, "stand upon it, so as completely to cover it. I will tell you what is on the paper all the same."

"What?" said she, with her eyes very wide open. After a moment's silence, I coolly said, "*You* are upon it." On which ensued shouts of laughter from the little ones; while she, springing away from the paper, cried—"Is *that* all?" but could not help laughing too.

I had one more trick for her in store. I took six pieces of paper, placed three of them on the back of my hand, and then, as a preliminary, blew them away with an air of great mystery—informing my audience, at the same time, that they were going to see something they did not expect. Then, placing the other three pieces in my hand, I said—

"Which of these three pieces do you desire shall remain on my hand, when I blow on them?" The children drew round. Louisa looked keenly

at me, and then, with decision, selected her piece. I immediately placed my forefinger on it, and blew the others away; while the children laughed and clapped their hands; and Louisa exclaimed, with anger at herself for having been deceived into expecting anything better—"Oh, Mrs. Cheerlove, anybody could do that!"

Sponge-cakes and roast apples concluded the evening.

Two dozen rosy little country children and more came to my door this morning, with their little nosegays of cowslips, primroses, blue-bells, and cuckoo-flowers, tied at the top of small peeled wands, chanting their artless rhyme of

> "Please to remember the first of May,
> For 'tis the ladies' garland-day;"

which Mr. Sidney thinks a variation from

> "For 'tis *Our Lady's* garland-day."

However that may be, who can refrain from giving halfpence and biscuits to the pretty little

rogues? The white-headed milkman is carrying quite a beau-pot of garden and hot-house flowers, on the inverted lid of his milk-pail, from house to house, this afternoon, hoping for a sixpence or shilling here and there, which may meetly be granted to his grey hairs and laborious life. For, in hot afternoons, along the shadeless road, and long before dawn, on inhospitable winter mornings, in face of hail, snow, rain, or ice, this old man punctually fulfils his vocation, which none should heedlessly call light. He is one of our country worthies. Another is the postman, who brings our letters at six in the morning, and calls for those we wish to post at seven in the evening; a stalwart, Robinson Crusoe-like looking man, with cheery voice and intrepid mien, who wears a brigand-like high-crowned hat, enormously thick boots, and a leathern belt, and padlocked bag. I know his swift, steady tramp from afar, and like to hear his blithe "good-night" to Phillis.

This man's name is Love. Phillis did not know him or his name when she first came here, and finding such a formidable-looking personage at the door about dusk, asked him somewhat

bluntly—"Who are you?"—"Love," said he, with equal curtness. "Nonsense!" said Phillis. On which he burst out laughing, and assured her it was his true-born surname, and that he had no other, except that which was given him by his godfathers and godmothers. Whereupon Phillis, as she averred afterwards, was ready to bite her tongue off for speaking such a foolish word, and for a long time she hated to answer the door to him; but gradually they have become cronies (I believe he is equally civil to all the servants along the road), and she even sometimes asks after his wife.

Emily Prout came to me this morning, all smiles, to show me Harry's first letter. I could not help observing how much older she looked in mourning; sorrow and fore-thought have laid their fingers on her young brow; while her manners are remarkably lady-like and self-possessed. Harry, after warm-hearted inquiries for all at home, went on to say that his first lodging was horrid—its evils were beyond description. However, in the course

of a few days, he had called on Mrs. and Miss Welsh, who, to his surprise, had received him as kindly as if he had been the son of an old friend. It was very encouraging. And they had invited him to tea that very evening, and everything was as snug and cosy as at dear Mrs. Cheerlove's; and Mrs. Welsh quite pitied him about his lodging, and said she knew a very much better one, *and cheaper,* in her own street; and he had already moved into it, and was as comfortable as possible. The few inconveniences that *might* be named, he would not; they would do him good:

> "Lives of great men all remind us,
> We may make our lives sublime!"

which he meant to do. And Miss Welsh was a delightful companion, and had promised ("to take him" scratched out) he should take her to the National Gallery, British Museum, and all the gratis sights, little by little, till he had seen them all. And he was always to go to church with them, morning and evening ("which you know will save the expense of tipping the pew opener, and be more sociable too.") And Mr. and Mrs. Whitgrave,

also, were very nice people. He had found an Italian patriot there, who spoke of unhappy Orsini; and had known that glorious Garibaldi, and related how Madame Garibaldi swam across a river, holding on by her horse's tail. And he did not mind the office life at all; he had so many pleasant things to think of. James and Ned and he should see one another sometimes. James had a tail coat, and did not look bad.

Poor, good, brave boy! For there *was* bravery in thus meeting insurmountable evils in a great, untried world. I loved him for dwelling so on the cheerful side; and a tear started into my eye, when Emily, in her affectionate way, kissed me, and said, "All *this*, dear Mrs. Cheerlove, is owing to *you*."

"*Il se répand quelquefois de faux bruits.*" And the corollary ought to be, "Do not help to spread them." Small country towns are proverbially rife with false reports, often to the serious detriment of their subjects, even when the reports themselves are not ill-natured.

I have known so many groundless reports heedlessly spread, that my custom is to say, "Oh! indeed," and let the matter drop, unless there should be anything of a noxious tendency in it; and then I not only forbear to pass it on, but endeavour to make the reporter admit at least the possibility that it may be untrue or exaggerated. This may sometimes lessen the rapidity and virulence with which it spreads; at any rate, I have been found a non-conductor, and my house "no thoroughfare." When Mrs. Brett asked me mysteriously if I had heard the dreadful news that Mr. Hope was going out of his mind, I not only replied in the negative, but gave my reasons for supposing it untrue: and so it has proved. Again, when Miss Secker told me that the Holdsworths were such adepts in table-turning, that the tables flew about the room like mad, *especially after unbelievers,* I plainly told her I must hear it confirmed by more than one credible witness before I could believe it; and some weeks afterwards I had an opportunity of quietly inquiring about it of Mrs Holdsworth's aunt, who assured me it was all nonsense, and that a mere Christmas waggery

had been distorted into a scandal, greatly to the annoyance of Mr. and Mrs. Holdsworth. That report, too, of old Mrs. Ball's sudden death, and their holding a glass over her mouth to see if she breathed, actually had not a shadow of foundation, and would never have been traced, had not some one accidentally opened a letter that was intended for somebody else.

This morning, Miss Burt told me what I should be very sorry to hear, were I assured of its truth, although I have no personal acquaintance with the parties. But though Mr. and Mrs. Ringwood may have had some little differences, I cannot think that they will separate. His companionable qualities are such, that they lead him too much into society; and, as the editor of a somewhat influential local paper, he has a certain literary reputation. This may (though it need not) make him less domestic and more dissatisfied with cold mutton at home than one could wish, especially if the cold meat be accompanied with cold looks, and the only tart is a tart reply. Nor is it impossible that Mrs. Ringwood may be a bit of a worry, and revenge herself for lonely

evenings by morning confidences of how she is used, and what she has suffered. I think she looks a little querulous and self-conceited. But this report I believe to be idle.

Mrs. Pevensey has again taken me a drive. This time, it was through the town, along the north road, and all round Hutchley Heath, which looked lovely. As we passed Mrs. Prout's, it was melancholy to see the sale going on:—old stair-carpets hanging out of the windows, shabby-looking chairs and glasses on the door-step and in the hall, with business-like brokers looking at them in a disparaging way. The surgeon, who has purchased the business, has been glad to take the house, but not the furniture; so Mrs. Prout is selling off all she does not want, and removing the rest into No. 2, Constantine Terrace, where everything is so fresh and clean, that Mrs. Pevensey thinks she will find herself far more comfortably situated than in her large, old house.

"Well," said Mrs. Pevensey, smiling, "we

are going to have a great loss in our family. We are going to lose Mademoiselle Foularde!"

"Indeed!" said I.

"Yes; she is going to leave us at Midsummer, and settle in Germany. She is engaged to be married to a Professor Bautte."

"Professor of what?"

"Gymnastics.—I knew you would smile; but you *would* ask."

"Oh, I only smiled because I was surprised. I concluded he was a professor of metaphysics, at least; or something prodigiously learned, that I did not understand."

"Gymnastics are safer than German metaphysics. The one can but break your neck, the other may turn your head."

"So you will have to look out again."

"Yes, but at my leisure. I think of taking all the children to the sea-side for the holidays; and as the younger ones are rather beyond the nurse, and require to be kept a little in order, I have been thinking of offering to take Emily Prout with us, if she would undertake their charge."

"Dear me! what a very nice thing!"

"You do not think she would object to it, then?"

"Oh no! I am persuaded she would like it exceedingly. She is so very anxious not to be burthensome to her mother! And she is much more womanly than she was. Her manners are so quiet and pleasant, that I feel sure you will like her."

"Well, it may be that if I found her enough of a governess for Rosaline and Flora, we may make a permanent engagement; but I shall prefer seeing what is in her first, which I can very well do during the holidays. She is very young, I believe."

"Barely seventeen. Too young for Arbell."

"Oh, I am not thinking of Arbell. Arbell is getting on very well at present; the chief danger is of her doing too much. She is growing fast, and I shall not be sorry to slacken her lessons a little for some months. If I find I can leave the children quite comfortably with Miss Prout, at Hardsand, Mr. Pevensey and I shall probably take Arbell with us on a tour of some extent. It

will open her mind, and give her something to remember with pleasure, all the rest of her life."

"It will, indeed, be a great treat to her; and it is such an advantage to young people to see new and interesting places with their parents. Is she sorry Mademoiselle is going away?"

"Not sorry; but she behaves to her very pleasantly, and is busy in my room, at every spare moment, working a present for her. Arbell is very clever at her needle."

"That is a good thing, for every woman ought to be so, whatever her condition. How it beguiled the captivity of Mary Queen of Scots! Queen Caroline, the wife of George II., used to do great quantities of knotting. And think how Marie Antoinette, Madame Elizabeth, and Madame Royale, used to mend their own clothes and those of the poor king, in the tower of the Temple. No doubt it, in some measure, diverted their thoughts from their sad fate. The tranquillizing effect of needle-work is what our impulsive, excitable sex cannot be too grateful for."

"My mother knew an old Scotch countess,"

said Mrs. Pervensey, "who, in her latter days, used often to exclaim, piteously, 'Oh, that I could sew!'"

After a pause she resumed:—"I have sometimes puzzled myself about the much-vexed question, 'Should we try to do good in the world at large, before we have done all the good that needs to be done at home?' There is a great cry got up against Mrs. Jellaby, and other pseudo-representatives of a class whose sympathies are widely engaged; and so much has been said about 'charity beginning at home, and charity that ends there,' that one gets rather perplexed. The Bishop of Oxford has, I think, lately settled the question. He said, 'Our Saviour foresaw and provided against it, by dispersing His disciples far and wide, while yet much remained to be done in Jerusalem.' Here is a guide, then, for us: we may do all the good we can, far and wide, even though we should be disappointed nearer home, or even *in* our homes, of doing all the good we *wish.*"

After this, we fell into a very interesting conversation, which I only hope was as profitable to

her as I felt it to be to me. I have been stupid and sluggish of late, but this interchange of thought, feeling, and experience quite roused me.

Christian and Hopeful were approaching the end of their journey when they came to the drowsy land called the Enchanted Ground; and the way they kept themselves awake was, by conversing freely on their past experiences of God's mercies and providences.

This morning, I have had rather a painful little adventure.

Though the wind was southerly, and the clouds portended rain, yet Phillis was sure it would blow off. In fact, she had set her mind upon certain cleaning, which I believe she preferred doing in my absence; and as I took a hopeful view of the weather, I went to the weekday morning service at church.

On returning, as usual, in the rear of the little congregation, I was slowly drawling along Church

Row, and thinking what a pity it was that such good houses should be so falling out of repair, when down came the rain very heavily. I had just passed Mrs. Ringwood's, and noticed that the parlour-blind wanted mending, and that Mrs. Ringwood, with a baby in her arms, was idly looking over it. I began to spread my shawl more completely over me, and was putting up my umbrella, when some one from behind called, "Mrs. Cheerlove! Mrs. Cheerlove!"

The boy stopped the donkey, and said, "There's Mrs. Ringwood a calling of you."

I looked round, and saw her, without her baby, standing on her door-step, with her light curling hair blowing in the wind, while she eagerly looked after me.

"Do come in, ma'am," cried she, with great good-nature, and colouring as she spoke. "It is raining quite fast! I am sure you ought not to be out in it."

The boy, at the same moment, took the matter into his own hands, by turning the donkey round, so that I was before her door the next minute.

"I don't think it will come to much," said I,

bowing and smiling. "I'm extremely obliged to you. *Pray* don't come into the rain."

"Oh, it won't hurt me," said she, now at my side, "and it *will* hurt you. Do come in till it is over."

It was very good-natured of her. I made no more resistance, but alighted as quickly as my infirmities would permit, and entered the house just as the rain became a violent shower.

I was turning round to speak to the boy, when I saw him drive off, at a good deal quicker pace than he drove *me;* and Mrs. Ringwood said, laughing, "I told him to come for you when the shower was over; otherwise, the chair would have been quite wet, and unfit for your use."

So I followed her into the parlour, where she had put the baby down on a sofa, in order that she might run out to me.

"It was very lucky," said she, "that I was looking over the blind."

My heart smote me for having called her, even to myself, idle; and I thanked her very gratefully for her kindness. She answered with a smile, and then left me for a moment or two alone with the

baby. It was a long while since I had been alone with a baby; I looked at it with interest, and amused myself by making it smile.

A casual glance round the room disappointed my expectations of its comforts and capabilities. It was smaller than I should have supposed it, and inelegantly contrived. No fitting up could have concealed this; but the fitting up was not very good. The carpet was showy and shabby, and did not harmonize with the paper. The room wanted papering and painting; but the window-curtains were conspicuously new, and made the rest of the furniture look still more worn. On the table lay *Punch* and the *Athenæum*, and a smart cap in the process of making.

Mrs. Ringwood came back, looking rather discomfited. "Dear me," said she, "I can't find my keys—Oh, here they are!" And carrying them off, and her cap at the same time, she presently returned with a glass of wine and a biscuit, saying, "You really must take this."

In vain I assured her I was a water-drinker; I saw I should hurt her if I declined, and there-

fore took the glass, and put it to my lips, though I knew it would do me no good.

"I don't know what I should do without a glass of wine sometimes," said she. "I hope baby has not been troublesome."

"O no! What a nice little fellow he is! How old is he?"

So then ensued some baby-talk, which seemed to make us much better acquainted.

"He must be a great resource to you," said I.

"Well, children are plagues as well as pleasures, sometimes," said Mrs. Ringwood. "I often think people who have no families have no idea of what mothers go through."

"That is true enough, I dare say," said I. "But the maternal instinct is implanted to make us insensible to those troubles—or, at least, indifferent to them."

"Oh, nobody can be indifferent to them, Mrs. Cheerlove! Duty is duty, and pleasure is pleasure; but they don't amount to the same thing, for all that."

This was said with an asperity which seemed to place us miles apart again. The next moment she

added, "At least, time was—when I was very young, you know, and fresh married—when I believe I really did think them one and the same thing." She gave a little laugh, to hide a tear.

"I don't know how it may be with you," said I, twining the baby's little fingers round mine, "but I think in most people's lives there are times when, all at once, they seem to break down under their burthens, and to need a friendly arm to set them up again."

"Some have not that friendly arm," said she, her mouth twitching. "I only wish I had. Oh my goodness, Mrs. Cheerlove!"—suddenly becoming familiar and voluble—"you've no idea what a life mine is! These four walls, if they had tongues, could tell strange stories!"

"Ah! what walls could not?" said I, hastening from particulars to generals. "We were not sent into this world to be happy——"

"Well, *I* think we *were*," interrupted she; "and yours must be a strange, gloomy religion if it makes you think otherwsie."

"At any rate, we cannot depend on being

happy," said I, "as long as our happiness is founded on anything in this world."

"Ah! there I agree with you," said she, sighing profoundly; "there's no trusting to anything, or any one, whether servant, friend, or husband —you find them all out at last."

She fixed her eyes on mine.

"My lot," said I, "was, I know, a favoured one; but I never found out anything of Mr. Cheerlove, but that he was a great deal better and wiser than myself."

She raised her eyebrows a little.

"Some think that all men are superior to all women," said she, rocking the baby to and fro, "but I can't subscribe to that opinion. I think we have our rights and our feelings as well as our duties; and our rights and our feelings have some little claim to attention. When a man makes invidious remarks—"

"Or a woman either," said I, laughing a little.

"—Which are felt to be meant for personal application," pursued she, "one's spirit rises."

"Certainly, it is best to speak out," said I, "or else be silent."

"Oh, let them speak out! If it's in them, I'd rather it came out of them. I detest your innuendoes!"

"However," said I, "we can never make the crooked tree straight. We must take people as we find them."

"Or *leave* them!" said she. Then, suddenly pausing, she pressed me, quite in an altered tone, to take a little more wine. "You have scarcely tasted it—perhaps you prefer some other sort."

"Oh no, thank you. The fact is, I have so long been a water-drinker, that even a little sip makes my mouth feel all on fire."

"Ah! then that can't be pleasant, I'm sure," said she, cordially. "I won't press you to have any more. I only wish I knew what you *would* like."

"I like looking at you and your baby," said I, smiling.

"Do you think him like me?"

"Yes."

"Ah! you said that, I fear, to please me. I

own I laid myself out for it. But now, tell me, Mrs. Cheerlove, don't you think that we have pleasing things said rather too often to us before marriage, and too seldom afterwards?"

"Yes, I think that is sometimes the case."

"Oh, and how it depresses one, not to know if you please!—nay, to be pretty sure you don't! I'm sure, I could do anything, almost, to give satisfaction—take down a bed, lift a box!—"

"You would be like the French crossing the Alps when the trumpet sounded."

"Just so; I lose all sense of fatigue and crossness."

"Can't you hear a *mental* trumpet?"

"What?"

"Something *within*, that shall cheer you along your path."

"Ah! I fear I can't."

And the poor little woman, gushing into grief, told me, the acquaintance of an hour, such a tale of woe, that my tears flowed with hers. She was comforted by my sympathy, and said, clasping her hands—

"Oh that I could see my path clear!"

"I think you will," said I, though my hope was not very sanguine.

"Sometimes I think I'll write to mamma. I sit down and write her such long letters, and after all, don't send them."

"Excellent!" said I.

She looked surprised.

"Your plan is excellent," I pursued. "By pouring out your griefs to your dearest and earliest friend, you relieve your own mind; and, by not sending your letter, you give no pain to hers."

"But it is merely from irresolution," said she.

"Never mind what it is from. The plan is excellent. Continue to write to her—write often—pour out your whole heart—and then put the letter carefully away till the next day; enjoy the comfort of finding what a strong case you made out—and, having done so, burn it!"

"Are you joking?" said she.

"No, as serious as possible. It is no joking matter."

"Well, I thought you were too kind to do so.

And, dear me! I feel a great deal better for this talk. Things don't look so dark; and yet they have not in the least altered."

"Only a different hue is thrown over them. That makes all the difference sometimes;—and answers as well as if the things *were* altered, as long as we can make the hue last."

"Only," said she, beginning to chafe a little, again, "one cannot bear to be put upon."

"Ah," said I, gently putting my hand on her arm, "*the Christian will even bear to be put upon*, be it ever so much, and, for his Master's sake, bear it patiently; and when he *has* so far subdued his feelings as to be able so to do, how glorious the triumph, the happiness, and peace that will take possession of his heart!"*

"Oh!" said she, after a moment's deep pause, "what a cordial! How *could* you say it? What a mind you must have!"

"Not at all," stammered I, feeling dreadfully stupid and humiliated.

"*Could* you say it all over again? I have such

* These golden words were once spoken by a wiser tongue than Mrs. Cheerlove's.

a poor head, and would so gladly retain it. You can't, I suppose. Ah! well—'the Christian can bear to be put upon,'—that was the text—that's enough. It will bring all the rest to mind—the general effect, that is."

"And you'll try to *act* upon it?"

"Yes. I really will. I give you my word. Only it isn't at all fair all the effort should be on one side. But I'll try, though I'm sure I shall break down."

"Oh no! I hope better things of you!"

"Ah, you don't know me—I'm such a poor, weak creature. I don't like *him* to say so, though," she added, laughing, with one of those sudden transitions which seemed natural to her.

"Here comes the donkey-chair. I thank you *very* much for your great kindness."

"Mine? oh, don't name it. It has been all on the other side! What is the line of poetry about 'An angel unawares——'"

"In the Bible," suggested I, provoked at being tempted to smile.

"Oh yes! (what a shame!) 'thereby entertained,' and so on. Which is just what I've

done, you know. Oh, I'm so sorry you'll go. Do look in again some day. I have very few friends; for some people look down on me, and I look down on some other people. And so I get no society at all. Baby wants you to kiss him. 'Ta, ta, Mrs. Cheerlove.' Pretty fellow!" (kissing him rapturously). "Mind you don't get the hem of your dress draggled as you go down the steps. There now, the scraper has torn your braid! Mind your foot does not catch in it, and throw you on your face. I'll have that scraper mended against you come next. Mr. Ringwood has spoken of it several times. You've done me so much good, you can't think! more than a glass of wine!"

Poor little woman! I'm afraid her head is rather empty. But if her intellect has not been much cultivated, she has genuine affections—mingled with a good deal of *étourderie,* wilfulness, and self-appreciation. How they will get on together I cannot conjecture. A chance word of mine made a transient impression; but "the next cloud that veils the skies" will sweep it all away.

We must not, on that account, however, relax our humble endeavours, nor despise the day of small things. Line upon line, precept on precept, here a little and there a little, effect something at last. Grains of sand buried the Sphinx.

Directly I saw Phillis, I perceived a very queer expression on her face. "Ah," thought I, "she remembers what she said about the weather, and is rather ashamed of my having been caught in the rain. I shall charge her with it, and hear what excuses she can make. She is a capital hand at self-defence."

But, at that moment, my ears were struck by a loud, harsh, jarring sound, that absolutely petrified me—the piercing scream of a cockatoo!

"Where in the world is that bird!" cried I, in dismay.

"In our kitchen, ma'am," said Phillis, demurely. "'Tis a present from Miss Burt. I guess she thought you was fond of birds."

"Fond of them? Why, I'm so fond of them that I can't bear to see them in cages."

"But this here thing's on a stand!"

"Or anywhere but in their native woods," continued I, rapidly. "I have been offered canaries and bullfinches again and again, and always refused. The sweetest melody could not reconcile me to their captivity. And a cockatoo, of all birds in the world! Why, it will drive me distracted!"

"Well, there, *I* says 'tis a nasty beast," says Phillis, with a groan, "and has made a precious mess on my clean floor already, scattering and spirting its untidy messes of food all about, and screeching till one can't hear one's self speak. 'Do be quiet, then!' I've bawled to it a dozen times, and it answered me quite pert with, '*cockatoo!*'"

I could not help laughing. "Really," said I, "it is too bad of Miss Burt—she might have given me warning."

"Oh, I suppose she thought 'twould be an agreeable surprise," said Phillis, with a grim smile. "There's a note for you along with it."

"Pray give it me."

This was the note:—

"5, Chickweed Place, Elmsford, June 10.

"My dear Mrs. Cheerlove,

"I'm off this afternoon to Canterbury, to spend a month; and, meanwhile, have sent you my cockatoo to amuse you. Perhaps you did not know I had one. It only arrived yesterday, as a present from Lady Almeria Fitzhenry. So you see it is quite an aristocratic bird; and it will look extremely well on your lawn in fine weather, and, on wet days, afford you company. Mrs. Grove is dying to have one, so you may consider yourself favoured. If you get attached to it, you shall have it all the winter. I am sure it will be a pet with Phillis.

"Your affectionate friend,

"CORNELIA BURT."

"P.S. Please send me back the directions for making the magic ruff."

"Phillis," said I, "Miss Burt thinks you will make the cockatoo quite a pet."

"It's a great deal more likely to put me into a pet," said she. (Screech, screech, went the cockatoo.)

"He knows you are talking of him," said I, "and does not like to be spoken ill of behind his back."

"Then he'll hear no good of himself from me," says Phillis.

"The donkey-boy is waiting to be paid," said I, "and Miss Burt wants something sent back. I will send it by him, and write her a line about the bird."

"Suppose he takes it back," cried Phillis.

"No, that would hardly do."

"Well, 'twould look queer-like, that big stand in the donkey-chair!" and she went off laughing.

I hastily wrote:—

"Whiterose Cottage, Wednesday morning.

"My dear friend,

"On returning from church, I found your kind note and your bird awaiting me, and I am sorry your maid was obliged to return without the directions for knitting the ruff, which I in-

close. You are very good to provide an amusement for me in your absence; but if Mrs. Grove really wishes for the cockatoo, I hope you will let me transfer it to her, for its loud voice is too much for me, and I understand nothing of the management of birds. Wishing you a pleasant visit to your friends, I remain,

"Affectionately yours,

"HELEN CHEERLOVE."

Having dispatched this missive, I felt greatly relieved; but my morning's work had so tired me that I was fit for nothing but a long rest on the sofa, and would gladly have taken a little nap; but, every time my eyes were ready to close, I was roused by the angry cry of "cockatoo."

"That bird is a most disagreeable animal," thought I. "How can any one endure him? Even the wearisome cry of a gallina would less offend my ears. It would be long before I should wish for a parrot: but a parrot is a clever, entertaining bird, and affords some variety—this bird has only one word. A rook can only say 'caw,' yet contrives to make its one harsh note tolerably

pleasant; but *this* tiresome thing—Oh dear, there it goes again! Phillis must be tormenting it."

In fact, the cockatoo set up such a noise that I became quite irritable, and rang the bell. "Phillis, don't worry that bird."

"*I* worrit the bird?" cries she, in high dudgeon, "why, I wasn't even in the kitchen. I declare it worrits *me!*"

And, hastening off, she soon returned with the cockatoo on its stand, flapping its wings, and violently pecking her bare arms, and set it down before me with a jerk, saying, "There, you'll see now, mum, whether it's worrited by me or not. And it was a present, not to me, but to yourself."

"Poor Phillis! how *could* you let it peck your arms so?"

"Oh!" said she, mollified, and smearing them with her apron, "I'm not made of gingerbread!"

"But I really cannot have this bird *here*."

"Why, you see, he's quiet with *you*."

"But, if he is, I cannot be. I was trying to go to sleep; and I shall expect him to scream every moment."

"Oh well, then, I must carry him off."

"Don't let him peck your arms more than you can help."

"Of course I shan't," said she.

"He's really a handsome bird."

"Handsome is that handsome does," said Phillis, pitying her arms.

"Perhaps if I go along with you, offering him something to eat, he may not fly at you."

"Well, you can but try, mum," said Phillis.

So I did try; and directly he felt his perch in motion he flew, not at her, but at me.

"Oh, that'll never do!" says Phillis. "Tell ye what, you radical, I'll wring your neck for you as soon as think, if you don't keep quiet. Please, mum, leave 'un alone—you only makes him wus."

And off she went with her screeching enemy, leaving me deeply impressed with her own valour, and my incapability.

A man has just called for Mr. Cockatoo, bringing rather a *dry* note from Miss Burt, saying she was sorry I could not take a kindness as it was meant.

Early as the sun now rises, the nightingale is awake while yet dark, uttering the sweetest melody. Then a profound pause ensues; which, in half-an-hour or less, is broken by some infinitely inferior songsters; and soon, when the glorious sun uprears himself in the east, a full chorus of larks, linnets, thrushes, blackbirds, redbreasts, titmice, redstarts, and other warblers, pour forth their morning hymn of praise; while the rooks caw on the tall tree-tops, and the wood-pigeon and cuckoo are heard in the distant wood.

Yes, I am fond of birds in their own green shades. I am fond, too, of entomology, though not very knowing in it. The change of grubs into butterflies is so striking, that, as Swammerdam says, "We see therein the resurrection painted before our eyes." Spence and Kirby, in their delightful book, have elicited wondrous facts. How many people see rooks following the plough without knowing why they do so. It is in order to eat the cockchafer grubs which the plough turns up. The cockchafer grub, which remains in its larva state *four years,* preys not only on the roots of grass, but of corn; and will

so loosen turf, that it will roll up as if cut with a turfing-spade; so that the rooks do good service in destroying these mischievous little grubs. But insects are not universally mischievous. A fly was once discovered making a lodgment in the principal stem of the early wheat, just above the root, thereby destroying the stem; but the root threw out fresh shoots on every side, and yielded a more abundant crop than in other fields where the insect had not been busy.

This reminds me, while I write, of another instance of compensation, which occurred to my own knowledge. A great many years ago, a good old market-gardener, whom I well knew, and who used to go by the name of "Contented Sam," lost a fine crop of early green peas he was raising for the spring market, by a violent storm, which literally shelled the pods when they were just ready to gather, and beat them into the earth. He was looking at the devastation somewhat seriously, when some one passing cried out, "Well, master, can you see anything good in *that* now?" "Yes," said he, rousing up, "I dare say God has some good

purpose in it, somehow or other." And so it remarkably proved; for the peas, *self-sown*, came up late in the season, when there were none in the market, and sold at a much higher price.

To return to Messrs. Kirby and Spence. The friendship of these two good and eminent men lasted nearly half a century. During the course of that time, the letters that passed between them on entomology were between four and five hundred. These letters were mostly written on sheets of large folio paper, so closely, that each would equal a printed sheet of sixteen pages of ordinary type. These they called their "first-rates," or "seventy-fours;" the few of ordinary size being "frigates." But once, Mr. Kirby having even more than usual to say, wrote what he called "The Royal Harry," alluding to the great ship "Harry," built in the reign of Henry VIII., of which I have seen a curious print. This *note-worthy note* was written on a sheet nearly the size of a *Times* Supplement, and closely filled on three pages! Talk of ladies' long letters after this!

The correspondence sprang up, and was continued, some months before they ever saw each other.

They then spent "ten delightful days together," at Mr. Kirby's parsonage, and devoted part of the time to an entomological excursion in the parson's gig.

At length, the idea occurred to them both of writing a book on entomology together, and in a popular form, which should allure readers by its entertainment, rather than deter them by its dryness. All the world knows how happily they accomplished it; and I have heard one of them say, the partnership was so complete, that in subsequent years neither of them could positively say, "This paragraph was written by myself, and this by my friend."

This morning, as I was at work, enjoying the soft air through the open window, and listening to the blackbird and cuckoo, I heard a carriage stop at the gate, and soon afterwards, Arbell, carrying a parcel almost half as large as herself, came in, looking very merry, and said—

"Good morning, Mrs. Cheerlove! Mamma

thought you would like to see what I have been doing for Mademoiselle; so she set me down here, and will call for me presently."

And with busy fingers she began to take out sundry pins, and remove divers coverings, till out came a splendid scarlet cushion, elegantly braided in gold.

"How do you like it?" said she, wistfully.

"I think it superb! Will it not be rather too magnificent for Mademoiselle's *ménage?*"

"Mademoiselle is very fond of bright colours, and means to have everything very gay about her, though she will not have a house to herself, only a flat; so that I feel sure she will like it."

"Well, then, everybody must, for it is a splendid cushion, indeed! Why, the materials must have quite emptied your purse!"

"Mamma was kind enough to say, that if I did it well, she would not mind paying for the materials; and I am glad to say she is quite satisfied with it. But I particularly want to know what you think of the pattern."

"It is intricate, and very rich. Where did you get it?"

"In a way you would never guess," said Arbell, laughing. "One day, mamma took me with her to call on Mrs. Chillingworth; and as they talked of things that did not at all interest me, I sat looking at a great cushion on the opposite sofa, and thinking how bad the yellow braid looked, and how much better the effect would be in gold. The pattern pleased me; so I looked at it till I was sure I could remember it, and when I got home, I drew it on a sheet of paper. Mamma was amused, and said it was very ingenious of me; but I did not think of turning it to account, till it occurred to me that I might work it for Mademoiselle. So I asked mamma, and she approved of it, and said I might."

"Well, I think it does you great credit in more ways than one."

"How strange it was, Mrs. Cheerlove, that I should take such interest in doing something for Mademoiselle! I had such pleasant thoughts while working it. Oh, what do you think? I am going to have such a treat! Papa wishes to investigate the iron mines in Piedmont, and is going to take mamma and me with him; and on

our return, we are to see everything worth seeing. Will not that be delightful?"

"It will, indeed. Of course you will, meantime, learn to speak French, German, and Italian, as fluently as you can."

"Oh, yes; I am fagging very hard now; I have such a *motive,* not only for acquiring languages, but for improving in drawing, that I may sketch, and for obtaining information about all the objects in our way. I am making a list of 'things to be particularly observed.'"

"An excellent plan."

"You seem to have a good many books, Mrs. Cheerlove. Have you any likely to be of service to me, that you could lend me?"

"I am afraid they are hardly modern enough," said I, doubtfully. "You are perfectly welcome to any of them."

She scanned their titles at the back:—"'Alpine Sketches.' That's promising. '1814!' Oh, what years and tens of years ago! '*With all my heart, said I, as H. carelessly mentioned the idea.*' What an abrupt beginning!" She laughed, and replaced the volume on the shelf. "Mamma,"

said she, "has been reading the Rev. Mr. King's 'Italian Valleys of the Alps,' and is very desirous to see the great St. Bernard and Monte Rosa, and the Breithorn, and Petit Cervin. I am chiefly desirous to see Mont Blanc. There's such a charming account of it, and of Jacques Balmat, in 'Fragments du Voyage.' But Jacques Balmat is dead, though some of his family are guides. Papa has bought us two of Whippy's portable side-saddles, which fold up into waterproof cases, with spare straps, tethers, whips, and everything one can want; and he has bought guide-books, maps, saddle-bags, telescope and microscope, and air-tight japanned cases to strap on our mules, so that our equipment will be complete."

"You must take a sketch-book."

"Oh, yes, mamma has given me one already; and a journal, and a vasculum for dried flowers and ferns."

"You will see beautiful butterflies, as well as wild flowers, in the valleys."

"Are butterflies worth studying, Mrs. Cheerlove?"

"Certainly they are."

"I will recommend papa, then, to take a butterfly-net. Do you think it a good plan to keep a journal?"

"Very, if you put down things worth knowing, while they are fresh in your head; and refrain from such entries as—'Had very hard beds last night'—'breakfast poor, and badly set on table'—'feel languid and dispirited this morning, without exactly knowing why.'"

"Surely nobody could could put down such silly things as those," said Arbell, laughing; "at any rate, I shall not. Ah, the carriage is at the gate. Mamma desired me to give you her love, and say she could not come in to-day. Good-by! Here is a little book-marker, on which I have painted the head of Savonarola, for you, if you will be so kind as to accept it. Oh, and I was particularly desired to tell you that the cocoa-nut biscuits you liked so much, were made of nothing in the world but chopped and pounded cocoa-nut, loaf sugar, and white of egg, baked on wafer-paper. Good-by! good-by!"

The longest day has passed! There is always something sorrowful in the reflection, although the days do not really seem shorter, on account of the moon. It is the same kind of feeling which we experience more strongly, when we feel that we have passed the prime of life, though we are still healthy and vigorous, and our looking-glasses may tell us that our looks are not much impaired. But the early summer, and summer-time of life, are gone!

I went to church to-day; but the heat is now so over-coming, that I must discontinue my out-door exercise, while it lasts, till the cool of the evening. As I passed Mrs. Ringwood's, there was she at the open window with her baby, and she nodded and smiled, and cried, "How d'ye do, how d'ye do! You did me so much good! More than a glass of wine!"

She was not in low spirits just then, at any rate. And really I don't believe I could bear her peculiar trials as well as she does—even with a glass of wine!

Cooler weather again. I went to-day, in the donkey-chair, to call on Mrs. Prout in her new house. It is small but cheerful, with everything clean and fresh. A good deal of her old, heavy furniture has been supplied by less expensive but more modern articles, which are more suitable to the papering and fitting-up of the house; and yet I looked with partiality at a few things that had been rescued from the sale—the old bureau, easy-chair, work-table, &c.

When I entered, little Arthur and Alice were the only occupants of the drawing-room, playing, in a corner of it, at "Doctor and Patient." What imitators children are!—"Well, mum, what is the matter with you, to-day?"—"Oh," says little, lisping Alice, coughing affectedly, "I have the guitar! (catarrh!)" After shyly exchanging a few words with me, they ran off, just as their mother entered.

She is an excellent little woman; there was no display of grief, but deep affliction beneath the surface; and now and then a tear strayed down her cheek, while yet she thankfully spoke of "many alleviations—many mercies." "But,"

as she truly said—"her loss was irreparable."

All the while, there was Mr. Prout's good-tempered countenance looking down on us from the picture-frame, as if he approved of all she said. It almost startled me when I first went in; and I sedulously avoided looking at it, or even towards it, when his widow was in the room; yet she evidently had gazed on it so continually, that she could now do so without shrinking; and I often observed her eyes turning in that direction, as if the portrait afforded her a sad consolation.

She told me, it was quite arranged that Emily should spend the holidays with the Pevenseys; and asked me somewhat anxiously, whether I thought there could be any hopes of its leading to a permanent engagement. As I was not authorized to communicate what Mrs. Pevensey had mentioned in confidence, I only spoke hopefully, and said, I could see no reason why it should not.

"Emily is rather afraid of undertaking Miss Pevensey," said Mrs. Prout. "She thinks she

looks too womanly, and probably knows already more than she does herself. But I, who know what is *in* Emily, have no fears on that score; only, to be sure, she does look—and *is*—very young."

"I don't think looks much signify," said I, "if there be self-possession, and a temperate manner."

"And Emily has both," said Mrs. Prout.

While she was speaking, little Arthur came in, and laid a bunch of radishes, wet with recent washing, and placed in a toy basket, in her lap. I had heard a boy calling radishes along the row. Mrs. Prout smiled, kissed him, and said, "Good boy; we will have them by and by for tea;" and he ran off with them, quite elated.

"He has spent the last halfpenny of his allowance on them, I know," said she, with a motherly smile; "and all for me. That is the way with the generous little fellow—he continually spends his pocket-money on me; whether on a few violets, or radishes, or perhaps a little measure of shrimps—something he trusts in my liking, because he likes it himself."

"Such a little fellow is lucky to have any pocket-money at all," said I.

"Oh, they all have their little allowances," said Mrs. Prout. "Perhaps you think me wrong, in my reduced circumstances, to continue them, and it *was* a matter of consideration; but their father and I had felt alike on that subject, and I therefore resolved only to diminish them to half the amount, and save in something else, rather than reduce them to absolute penury. I don't like pinching on a large scale; I cannot, therefore, expect them to do so on a small one. Besides, it teaches children the value of money; gives them habits of calculation, forethought, and economy. How can they practise self-denial, charity, or generosity, without something, however trifling, they can call their own? But I never permit them to exceed their allowances, or borrow, or run in debt. If they spend too freely at the beginning of the week, they must suffer for it till the week after. Arthur and Alice had twopence a week each, but now they have only a penny; thus, they too, know something, practically, of 'reduced circumstances;' and the

stipends of the elder ones have been lowered in proportion. So you see, I am not, after all, very extravagant."

I thought, afterwards, how much sense there was in what she had said; and regretted her rule was not oftener acted on in families. Mrs. Pevensey, for instance, not unfrequently makes Arbell handsome presents, but gives her no regular allowance; consequently, not knowing what she has to expect, Arbell is sometimes improvident—sometimes pinched. Consequently, also, she knows little of the shop-prices of articles in common request, and does not regularly keep private accounts. I know it is not my province to interfere on the subject; but, should an opening unexpectedly occur, I will just direct Mrs. Pevensey's thoughts to it, by alluding to the plan pursued by Mrs. Prout.

Every one of these young Prouts has left off drinking sugar in their tea, to lighten their mother's bills; and at their own instance. How well it speaks for them!

Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond, says Spenser, were three brothers in Fairy-land :—

> "These three did love each other dearly well;
> And with so firm affection were allied,
> As if but one soul in them all did dwell,
> Which did her power into three parts divide."

In the course of their story, a deadly quarrel ensued between the youngest of these three brothers and Camball, brother of the Princess Canace, which was assuaged by the goddess Concord, who gave them Nepenthe to drink. And what is Nepenthe ?—

> "Nepenthe is a drink of sovereign grace
> Devised by the gods, for to assuage
> Heart's grief, and bitter gall away to chase,
> Which stirs up anger and contentious rage.
> Instead thereof, sweet peace and quietage
> It doth establish in the troubled mind;
> Few men, but such as sober are and sage,
> Are by the gods to drink of it assigned—
> *But such as drink, eternal happiness do find.*"

I can well believe it, good Mr. Spenser. Where can it be found? Did you ever drink of it yourself? or did you write thus feelingly because you sought and found it not? Oh! by what name shall we pray for it? *"The grace of God?"*

Here we are in the dog-days! and every one is complaining of the heat. Last night we had a thunder-storm, and Phillis was afraid to go to bed, till I told her that feathers were non-conductors. So then she thought, the sooner she was on her feather-bed, the better.

Mr. Cheerlove used to be very fond of watching the lightning—of enjoying what Sir Humphrey Davy called "the sublime pleasure of *understanding* what others *fear*, and of making friends even of inanimate objects." I own I can never help starting at a very vivid flash. But I admire those who are superior to vain alarms.

My garden is all-glorious with roses, from the China, Japan, Macartney, and Alice Grey, that embower the house and cluster the green palings with their crimson, pink, cream-coloured, and white blossoms, to the rarer yellow rose, and far more beautiful moss-rose, "queen of flowers!" I literally tread on roses as I walk from room to room, for every breath of air wafts the loose leaves through the windows, and scatters them about the carpets, making them, as Phillis says, "dreadful untidy."

The hay is pretty well carried, and I am glad to say that the hay-turning machine has not yet superseded hand-labour in this neighbourhood. The poor woman who, with her husband and baby, found nightly shelter in Cut-throat Barn, brought me some fine water-cresses at breakfast-time this morning:—a grateful return for some old linen and broken victuals.

The young Prouts came in just now, bringing in yellow bed-straw, harebells, three different sorts of heath, and a bunch of flowering grasses that will make a graceful winter nosegay.

While Arthur turned over the contents of my curiosity drawer, and Alice examined my collection of "pieces," with permission to select three of the prettiest for pincushions, Margaret read me Emily's first letter from Hardsand. All goes on satisfactorily. She finds herself quite equal to the charge of the children, and Mrs. Pevensey tells her she more than equals her expectations, and that she shall leave her at the head of the schoolroom department with perfect confidence. Emily says, that so many things, common to the Pevenseys, are new and delightful to her—their

polished manners and delightful conversation, the numerous little elegances about them, the well-conducted servants, luxuriously-furnished rooms, abundance of nice books, &c., all add something to her enjoyment. As for her position among them, she does not mind it at all; in fact, she is flattered by the confidence Mrs. Pevensey places in her, the obedience of the children, and the respect of the servants. She admires the sea, and the fine rough coast, and enjoys the daily walks on the sands. Arbell seems to like her, and she likes Arbell. "When the children are gone to bed," she writes, "and Arbell is in the drawing-room, you cannot imagine how I enjoy lying on the sofa and reading 'Tremaine.' But sometimes Mrs. Pevensey looks in, and says, 'Miss Prout, do come and join us—unless you are tired.' Then I spring up immediately, for I think it would neither show good manners nor good feeling to hang back; and the result is that I get a cheerful evening, and am made to feel completely one of themselves."

The Pevenseys were to cross the Channel the next morning: they were all in excellent spirits.

August is the month when the fields are ripe to harvest, and when, to use David's joyous imagery, "The little valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing." That is a beautiful line in a Scotch song, which, describing a graceful, pretty young girl, says—

"Like waving corn her mien."

Nothing can be more graceful than the motion of corn, stirred by the light summer air—not even the dancing, in his boyish days, of one of our greatest civil engineers—now, alas! dead. Light as feather-down, and as if it were the pleasure of his existence to float on his native element—the air—the next moment you might see him deep in some abstruse question with his father, grave as if he had never known a smile. (*"Ut in vitâ, sic in studiis, pulcherrimum et humanissimum existimo, severitatem comitatemque misure, ne illa in tristitiam, hæc in petulantiam procedat."* Be that his epitaph, from his old and early friend.)

Sir Isambard Brunel once showed us a stone perforated by an insect, which had suggested to him the horse-shoe form of the Thames Tunnel.

On how many of us would such a hint have been utterly wasted! Southey tells us that when Sir Humphrey Davy first ascended Skiddaw with him, he cast his eyes on the fragments of slate with which the ground was strewn, and, stooping to pick one up as he spoke, observed, "I dare say I shall find something here." The next moment he exclaimed with delight, "I *have* found something indeed! Here is a substance which has been lately discovered in Saxony, and has not been recognised elsewhere till now!" It was the *chiastolite.*

I can scarcely form a pleasanter mental picture, than of a young girl, healthy, talented, energetic, sweet-tempered, and with no burthen of self-consciousness or morbid feeling, tired, but not too tired, after her day's toil as governess to a tolerably docile set of young pupils (and all children may be *trained* to docility), and resting body and mind on a comfortable sofa in a cheerful room, with an entertaining book which interests her; or now and then drawn off from it by

pleasing thoughts of home, and of the appreciation which there overpays her labours. And such a picture do I form of Emily Prout.

Before Mrs. Pevensey sailed, she engaged Emily permanently, at a salary of eighty guineas, to be raised to a hundred if she prove equal to her situation.

This morning, on my way to church, I saw Mrs. Ringwood looking over her blind with rather a long face, and she bowed to me somewhat piteously. Now, I cannot say that I had forgotten her request that I would look in on her again, for it had occurred to me almost every time I passed her door; but, somehow, something had said within me, "No, I will not." There was no need, I told myself; and there certainly was no inclination; therefore my conscience was not at all uneasy—especially when I did not see her looking over the blind.

But now, it struck me, she might be specially looking out after me, and thinking it very cross

and unneighbourly of me not to call; she might even seriously wish to have a little talk with me; and it might do her more good than a glass of wine.

So I resolved to call as I returned: and I did as I resolved. A rather slatternly maid, for whom I would on no account have exchanged Phillis, said "Missis was at home;" and showed me straightway into the parlour, where was—not Mrs., but Mr. Ringwood.

I suppose some people think him good-looking, but he is too much be-ringed and be-whiskered for my taste. Mr. Cheerlove wore no whiskers; nor any rings. My taste, therefore, is plain. Mr. Ringwood is not plain—but rather showily good-looking.

He said—"Bless my soul, Mrs. Cheerlove! This is a great compliment, ma'am—I—(Jemima, tell your mistress)—I know how little you visit, and how greatly your visits are prized. You could not have paid me a more flattering compliment, ma'am, than in calling on my little wife."

Dear me, thought I, I shall not like this man at all—how oppressive he is! I am sure I never

thought of paying him a compliment, and wish he would not pay me any.

"I hope Mrs. Ringwood is well," said I.

"Well," said he, running his fingers through his hair, in the Italian way, or in imitation of it, "Emma is well enough, if she would but think herself so;—she wants to go to the sea-side."

"A nice time of year," said I.

"Ah, ha," said he; "but perhaps you are enough of a classical scholar, Mrs. Cheerlove, to have heard something of '*res angusta domi.*'"

"I have heard the expression," said I.

"Ah,—you don't deceive me in that way," said he; "I've heard of Mrs. Cheerlove's acquirements. You read by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

"I thought fame was acquired by writing rather than by reading," said I.

The absurd man bowed, as if I had meant to compliment him; for editing the *County Advertiser*, I suppose! Oh dear!

Luckily for me, Mrs. Ringwood came in, wearing the very smart cap I had seen her manufacturing on a previous occasion.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" said she, hastening towards me, all smiles. "I take it so kind of you!"

Then I asked how the baby was, and she told me he was cutting his teeth, and went into long details, naturally interesting to her, and very well to tell to me; but that might as well have been spared, I thought, in the presence of Mr. Ringwood. I wondered he did not walk off to his office. Instead of which, he stood, shifting from one foot to the other, running over the paper, and making it crackle prodigiously as he unfolded and refolded it; and at length he said, somewhat abruptly—

"My love, all this cannot be very entertaining to Mrs. Cheerlove."

"That is true, Alfred," said she, with a little flutter which I could not account for. "I was to blame for forgetting Mrs. Cheerlove had no family. How have you been, ma'am, lately? Don't you think a little sea-air would do you a great deal of good?"

I smiled, and said I did not feel any need of it.

" Oh, but it braces one so," said she. " It would strengthen ME, I know, more than all the wine and porter in the world!"

" Why should not you try to let your house?" said I. " Many people do."

" 'Pon my honour, Mrs. Cheerlove, that's a capital thought of yours!" burst in Mr. Ringwood. " I wonder it never occurred to me. I'll tell you what, Emma, if you can let the house for the autumn, you may go to Hardsand the very next day! Put up a ticket to-morrow."

" Oh, thank you, Alfred!" cried she. " I'm sure I'd no idea you would have consented to such a thing, or I would have proposed it before."

" (Don't believe such a thought ever entered your head," muttered he).

" I wonder, though," she continued doubtfully, looking round the room as she spoke, " who would take such a house as this?"

" Did you never hear Cowper's line," said he, quickly—

" 'We never shall know, if we never do try?' "

" I'm sure I've not the least objection to

trying—nay, I'm much obliged to you for letting me—"

"Not with the house," put in he, quite smartly.

"Of course not—how funny you are! But I haven't the least idea about these things."

"Your kind friend, Mrs. Cheerlove, can doubtless supply you with an idea or two—she has plenty of her own."

"Oh, yes. Well then, Mrs. Cheerlove, what steps should you recommend?"

"Oh, it is a very simple affair. Tell Mr. Norris, the house-agent, that you want to let your house, furnished, for the autumn, at such a price; and that it can be seen at such and such hours. Or, if you prefer it, you can put up a bill."

"Dear me, yes! I think I'll do both! How clever you are! So practical!"

"Ah, Mrs. Cheerlove," said Mr. Ringwood, with a shrug and a smile, "it's we literary people who are the practical ones after all!"

Then she began to consider how many beds she could make up, and what she should leave,

what she should take, and what she should lock up; whether she should allow the use of the piano, and whether the pictures should be covered; till her husband impatiently cried—

"Oh, hang the pictures!" and then laughed at his ridiculous exclamation.

"But really, Emma," continued he, "you need not give Mrs. Cheerlove a list of all the cracked wine-glasses."

"I haven't a list to give," said she with simplicity. "Perhaps it would be well if I kept one."

"You must make an inventory now, at any rate. Set about it this morning—it will keep you amused for a week."

"My dear Alfred, you are always finding things for *me* to do, instead of yourself. You forget the baby."

"You take good care, my dear, I shall not do that. Mrs. Cheerlove, how I do wish we could enlist you amongst us!"

"As what?" said I, amazed.

"As a contributor. Oh, you need not look so conscious!—murder *will out*. I know you

write. Now, do give me—poor, toil-worn editor as I am—some little assistance. On public and local affairs, of course, I want no aid; what I desire is historical anecdote, biographical sketches, traits of character and experience—all that sort of *materiel* for thought which may or may not be used, according to the will of the reader—pleased with the thing as it stands, but not always disposed to carry it on."

He spoke earnestly and well.

"You do me great honour," said I, "but, I assure you, you are quite mistaken in me. I could not afford you the help you need."

"Why—they said you wrote throughout your long illness!"

"Whoever *they* may be, I can assure you, I only used my pen in hours of solitude, as a companion; nothing more."

"But its results!——"

"Will never appear before the public. Oh no, I am no authoress. And I must confess to a prejudice against *female* assistants in our leading periodicals. I think it a province out of our sphere."

"Well, you compliment us," said he, bowing; "but I own you have not satisfied me. I am convinced you *could*, if you *would*. Dear me! how time runs away, to be sure! I must run off this moment; but one takes no count of time in *your* presence, Mrs. Cheerlove."

And, presenting his hand to me in a very affable manner, and bowing over mine, he flourished off.

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Ringwood, taking a deep breath; "how you've drawn him out! Oh, I do so enjoy good conversation! But I'm no converser—never was. Always such a simple little thing!"

I knew not what to say; and she almost immediately went on in a dreamy sort of way—

"He used to tell me before marriage, he loved simplicity; so I wasn't afraid, you know. But now he likes intellect better."

"But why should you despair of pleasing him, even then?"

"Oh, he knocks me down so! I don't mean literally," cried she, seeing my look of dismay; "but he has a way of *setting* people down, as the

saying is, whenever they talk in a way that does not please him; and if I am chatting a little, and he wants to cut it short, he says, 'My dear, I beg your pardon,' quite politely; and takes the lead, and keeps it—'My *dear,*' not 'My love.' It was so pleasant to hear him say, 'My love!' to-day."

"Well," said I, "you will be busy now, and I hope soon to hear of your having let your house." And so I talked a little about various watering-places, as if she might pick and choose where she liked; though, after all, very probably, she will have no choice but Hardsand. And I told her what a cheerful, bracing place Hardsand was considered.

But, as I rode home, I thought that, perhaps I had done the little woman no kindness, after all; for her efforts to let her house might only end in disappointment. And the more I thought of blinds, scrapers, &c., wanting repair, crumb-cloths wanting washing, and wine-glasses wanting replacing, the less chance there appeared to me of anybody's being attracted by the house.

"A pennyworth of putty and a pennyworth of paint," said a nobleman, in the last century, "would make my countess as handsome as any at court." Certes, a pennyworth of putty and a pennyworth of paint, or something equivalent, will often go far towards making a house look tidy and respectable. But, in Mrs. Ringwood's domain, *il poco piú* is sadly wanting. A man may laugh at an Irish waiter who confidentially whispers to him, as he hands him his venison, that "there is no currant jelly on the sideboard, but plenty of lobster-sauce," but he will not endure it from his wife.

—— What luck some people have! The Ringwoods have let their house the very first day! Just now, I was very much surprised by a call from Mr. Ringwood, who looked much more gentlemanlike than he did yesterday, and said, with a very pleased look, "Mrs. Cheerlove, I am sure you will be glad to hear the good news,

and therefore intrude to tell you of it myself. I called on Norris just now, and found the Hawkers are wanting a ready-furnished house, while their own is painting—that is to say, for six weeks; so I've seen Mr. Hawker, and we came to terms immediately; supposing, of course, that the ladies make it out together. But I am sure Emma will be glad to make every concession to Mrs. Hawker, so I look on it as a done thing. Don't you wish me joy?"

I told him I did, very sincerely.

"So you see," said he, laughing triumphantly, "we literary people *are* the practical ones, after all!"

"Mrs. Ringwood must be much obliged to you," said I, "for so promptly carrying out her wishes."

"Yes," said he, drumming on his hat; "but I own I don't see that I ought to be expected to do everything in my office and out of it too. A man, or even a woman, who fills the house-keeping purse, ought not to be liable to every other branch of bother."

I thought with him, but only observed, that where there was one clever head in the family, the others might accustom themselves, unconsciously, to depend too much on it.

"I believe you are right," said he, stroking the important member in question with a thoughtful air as he spoke. "I spoilt Emma myself in the first instance—instead of remonstrating when I should have done so, about one little matter and another. The consequence is——No matter; but we shall *never* get straight now—never, never! I utterly despair of it."

"Ah, you are too sensible to do that! To make the best of untoward circumstances, even if they result from our own fault, is not only more prudent, but more noble, than to sit down in Ugolino-like despair."

"'Ugolino-like' is the light in that sentence!" said he. "Excuse me, but you know I make a business of these things, and often have to insert them in heavy articles. That phrase will fix your saying in my memory, and I will endeavour to act upon it too—without which I know you

won't care a half-penny for my remembering, or even quoting it. Ah, Mrs. Cheerlove, you owe the world something from your pen. Why not try?" in a tone intended to be very insinuating.

"There are plenty in the field already," said I.

"Plenty, such as they *are*," responded he. "Plenty—and too many! Oh, if you knew the curiosities of literature that I hand over to my sub-editor! Now, I'll read you a *morçeau* I received this morning. I think I might *defy* you to make anything like it. The subject is the fancy bazaar our ladies are going to hold at Willington:—

> "'Come to Willington bazaar!
> Enter, neighbours, near and far.
> Pure delightsome harmony
> Welcomes all friends cheerily;
> Crops of pretty useful things,
> Philanthropy to market brings;
> Sympathy with ardour buys,
> What industrial zeal supplies!'

Do you think you could have done that? No, I'm sure you couldn't!"

And, in excellent humour with himself and with

me, he took leave, waving his hand towards the book-case as he went, and saying :—

> "An elegant sufficiency! content,
> Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
> Progressive virtue, and approving heaven!"

Guido Sorelli beautifully says, "I learn the depth to which I have sunk, from the length of chain let down to updraw me." Without inquiring into his wisdom in publishing his "Confessions," (written for the public, apparently, and *not* for Silvio Pellico), they certainly have, as he says, a tendency to bring the reader to "a saddening contemplation of his own heart." This sensitive Italian was converted by the Bible, which he, in the first instance, read for an hour daily, and completely perused in three months; never opening it without first praying for humility. Nor did he ever commence his daily seven hours' task of translating "Paradise Lost," without imploring divine assistance; and the last four years of his

ten years' labour of love, "bore the impress," he tells us, "of a happiness almost beatific." Such are the silent, satisfying rewards which high and virtuous art bestows on her children, wholly independent of fame or emulation. Like the exquisite *fanatico per la musica,* in La Motte Fouqué's "Violina," they "carry on their labour as a sweet secret, hardly knowing at the time whether they shall ever feel inclined to make it known." The "last infirmity of noble minds," is their seeking the confirmatory sentence of some master-spirit, whom the voice of the world, and their own cordial acknowledgment, place far above themselves. All beyond this opens the door to rivalry and uneasiness. Once know that you do a thing well, and the calm pleasure needs not to be augmented by everybody's owning it.

If a botanist ranges over an entire meadow, and find one or two new specimens, he thinks his labour not in vain. And if I find one or

two noteworthy passages in a book, I am glad I have read it. Here, now, is the life of Pollok. What true soul of art has not experienced, at some period of its existence, the depression and despondency, the suspicion of its own self-delusion, thus expressed by the young Scottish poet?—

"The ideas," he says, "which I had collected at pleasure, and which I reckoned peculiarly my own, were dropping away one after another. Fancy was returning from her flight—memory giving up her trust; what was vigorous becoming weak, and what was cheerful and active, dull and indolent." And yet he was at this time on the brink of writing an immortal poem! One December night, sitting alone in his lodgings in great desolation of mind, he, to turn his thoughts from himself, took up the first book within reach, which happened to be Hartley's "Oratory." He opened on Lord Byron's "Darkness," and had not read far when he thought he could write something to the purpose on the subject of the general resurrection. After revolving his ideas a little, he

struck off about a thousand lines—the now well-known passage, beginning,—

"In 'customed glory bright!"

Soon afterwards he wrote to his brother, that "he had lately been soaring in the pure ether of eternity, and linking his thoughts to the Everlasting Throne!" "And I knew," says his brother, "that he had now found a subject to write on." "May the eternal and infinite Spirit," wrote this sympathizing brother in return, "inform your soul with an immortal argument, and enable you to conduct it to your own happiness in time, and blessedness in eternity; and to His praise, honour, and glory for ever!"

Soon after this, Robert returned to his father's humble dwelling, at Moorhouse, where he continued his poem, but without any definite plan. "One night, sitting alone in an old room, and letting his mind wander backward and forward over things at large, in a moment, as if by an immediate inspiration, the idea of the poem struck him; and the plan of it, as it now stands,

stretched out before him, so that at one glance he saw through it from end to end like an avenue. He never felt, he said, as he did then; and he shook from head to foot."

How soon September has come! The roses are now nearly all over; but the ram's-head border I had cut in the grass-plat last spring is gay with fuchsias, verbenas, geraniums, and balsams. Miss Burt, who has no garden of her own, comes now and then to expend, as she says, some of her superfluous energies, in raking and hoeing my garden, while I sit near her in a light wicker chair, and watch her proceedings. She became tired of her cockatoo about a month after her return, and made a present of it to Mrs. Grove. The cockatoo thus shared the fate of a certain fine cucumber, which I remember being passed from house to house one autumn, till at length somebody was found who liked it.

Mrs. Pevensey's gardener's boy brought me a

delicate little griskin this morning, to show me that, though out of sight, I am not out of mind. I am reading a curious little tale Mrs. Pevensey lent me, called "Agathonia," about the Colossus of Rhodes. The style is inflated rather than grand, which makes the incidents appear less grand than inflated; but yet, I am struck with the story, which, picturesquely enough, opens thus:—

Three weather-worn brigantines, belonging to Ben Shedad the Jew, are anchored in the harbour of Rhodes, to carry off a hundred brazen statues, the masterpieces of Lysippus and Chares, as well as the renowned Colossus, whose remains have for nine centuries encumbered the arsenal. The bastions are crowded with victorious Saracens —not a Rhodian is to be seen among them; the island has been conquered and humiliated, its temples razed, its churches defiled, its vineyards rooted up, its population maltreated, and, to conclude, its works of art sold to the Jews.

As Ben-Shedad and his crew are proceeding to the spot where the prostrate Colossus lies em-

bedded in sand and rushes, one of the Jews attempts to propitiate Velid, son of the emir of Rhodes, by kissing the hem of his garment. The young man shrinks from him in disgust, and, turning to his friend Al Maimoun, asks whether artizans might not have been found on the island who might have removed the statue without its being polluted by the touch of an accursed race. Al Maimoun replies, that certainly the camp of the faithful might have supplied workmen; and Velid rejoins, that were he not compelled to respect the contract, his soldiers should pitch the Hebrews into the harbour.

Meantime, the attention of the Saracen bystanders, who have been deriding and cursing the Jews, is diverted towards another party slowly approaching the Colossus, consisting of an Ascalonian soldier of the emir's, three Rhodians, and a tall, grizzled Numidian, who bear a closely-curtained litter, which is accompanied by two veiled females. One of the women stoops with age, but the other is slender and graceful as a young roe. The crowd divides before them; and,

when they reach the fallen Colossus, the Rhodians pause, and, the litter-curtains being drawn back, disclose the venerable grey head of an old man, spiritual as an apostle, mild as a sage, who gazes long on the Colossus, lit up by the setting sun, and then sinks back and weeps.

All this is very vivid and touching.

A vague, but terrible report has reached me,—I fervently hope it may not be true,—that a dreadful accident has happened to the Pevenseys somewhere abroad. Phillis heard it of the baker. I am on thorns, while waiting for more particulars. This October has set in wet; the rain has fallen fast all the morning, and I cannot send out for the donkey-chair, nor spare Phillis to go out and make inquiries; nor is a creature likely to call.

Miss Secker has just been here. She says the report came from the Stone House. Mr. Pevensey had written some hurried orders to the steward, saying Mrs. Pevensey, in crossing the

Mer de Glace, had fallen through a *crevasse,* and, with difficulty, had been drawn up with ropes, alive, but nearly dashed to pieces. Oh, melancholy news! the mother of so large a family! so kind a neighbour! so admirable a wife! so charitable and exemplary in the various relations of life! What a loss she will be, should she not recover! Meanwhile, what responsibility devolves upon poor Arbell, her sole nurse! It is enough to put a grey head on her young shoulders.

This morning, I could not rest till I was off in the donkey-chair to call on Mrs. Prout, and inquire whether she had heard anything from Emily. The post had just come in; I found them in tears over Arbell's letter, inclosed to them by Emily. It was written at her mother's bedside, in the little parsonage of a Swiss *pasteur.*

Poor mamma, she wrote, was taken out more dead than alive. The guides, who were all goodness, made a kind of litter for her with their

poles and ropes, and threw their jackets over it. But when papa lifted her on it, she thrilled all over, like a little bird that had fallen out of its nest; and Arbell turned her head away, for it made her feel quite sick. So then, as the litter shook her so much, they only took her at first to the nearest *châlet,* where there was a very kind *bergere,* and where they laid her on the heaps of hay for the cows; and a guide ran off to the inn for an English doctor, whose name they happened to have seen on the travellers' book.

Meanwhile, poor mamma lay quite still; but her face was very cold. And once, when Arbell softly wiped the damp off it, and kissed her white lips, she whispered, "Good girl—dear Arbell!" so that she was ready to burst into tears, but knew she must not. And when the guide came back, he said the English doctor had gone up Mont Blanc; and Arbell could not help thinking, how stupid and wicked it was of him, to be running after such nonsense when he had better have been minding his own business. However, he brought back mamma's maid, Kent, and a famous

mountain doctor, who ordered a sheep to be killed, and mamma to be immediately wrapped in its skin, which they did. And, directly afterwards, a most benevolent-looking *pasteur* (such another as Oberlin must have been!) came in, with a face of kind concern; and, after a few words with papa, it was arranged that the guides should carry mamma, who seemed in a stupor, to the *pasteur's* house, which was close at hand, and much quieter than the inn. So they did so; Arbell holding her vinaigrette to mamma's nose all the way, though she could not be quite sure it was of any use. When they got there, such a neat old housekeeper came out, quite a Louise Schepler; for the *pasteur*, like Oberlin, was a widower. But he had no children, which was all the better, because the house was all the quieter. So they took dear mamma into the best bedroom, where everything was very poor and scanty, but very clean; and just then, the English doctor arrived, who had only gone a little way up the mountain after all, and, strange to say! had turned back under an unaccountable impression

that he was wanted. And he said, as mamma was in the skin, she might as well remain in it, though it was queer practice; and then he gave her a very strong restorative from the *pasteur's* medicine-chest, which made her open her eyes and look slowly round, without turning her head; and then he said "You'll do, my dear madam, now;" and nodded and smiled, and went off talking to papa quite cheerfully. But, oh! he was quite mistaken; for, as soon as the effect of the restorative subsided, mamma felt herself rapidly sinking, and told papa she knew she was going to die. Then poor papa, who had returned quite hopeful, lost all his courage again, and cried bitterly; and called the *pasteur,* who came in, and knelt down, and offered, oh! such a heavenly prayer! Even Kent, who understood not one word of it, said the very *tone* was prayer. He began *"Seigneur!"*—and then made a great stop —and then began again, "Seigneur! Holy and just are all thy ways! Who shall not magnify thee, O God most holy?" And then went on. Arbell's head was too confused for her to retain it

in her memory, but it sank into her heart, and seemed to carry her up to heaven, quite away from all earthly, vexing cares. And when they rose from their knees, dear mamma was asleep, and slept for hours! Meanwhile, papa got some very strong jelly from the inn, and when she woke, he or Kent gave her a spoonful of it from time to time, which she seemed to like; for, when she wanted more, she opened her lips without speaking; and Arbell or Kent watched her lips all night long, taking it by turns to sleep a little on the ground. Poor papa got a little rest in the easy-chair in the parlour. The doctor—Dr. Thorpe—had come very early in the morning, and twice more in the course of the day, and was excessively kind, though at first he had seemed rather *brusque*. He said all the travellers, inn-people, and guides were deeply interested in mamma, and prayers were being offered up. (Poor Arbell's writing was here smeared with tears). An English lady had sent Arbell a little text-book, which was a great comfort to her, and so were many hymns she remembered; but she

had her little diamond Bible in her pocket already; there were parts in it that she thought she should never be able to read hereafter without their bringing to mind that little whitewashed room, with table, chairs, and drawers painted sea-green, and cold, uncarpeted floor. She was going to bed that night—papa insisted on it; but at four o'clock Kent would change places with her; the *pasteur* was going to sleep in the easy-chair. She would soon write to dear Miss Prout again.

Thus ended poor Arbell's letter. What depths of new experience had she sounded in a few hours! I could not help thinking of those beautiful words of the prophet Hosea, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." I felt an impression that it would be so in this instance.

The Pevenseys had been what people might call a *moderately* religious family; but without much devotional feeling apparent among them. Mrs. Pevensey was a churchwoman; her husband had

been brought up among dissenters; Mademoiselle Foularde was a Roman Catholic; and each had such a well-bred respect for what they deemed the prejudices of one another, that I had sometimes feared it tended to a little indifferentism in practice. But what right had I to judge of others? To their own Master they would stand or fall.

> "Motives are all, in Heaven's impartial eye,
> But 'tis not ours to doubt and give the lie;
> Let each give credit to his neighbour's share,
> But analyse his own with utmost care." *

How many afflicting thoughts must have passed through poor Mrs. Pevensey's mind, as she silently lay, hour after hour, sewn up in her sheep-skin! I thought she must have needed *more* than the fortitude of a Roman matron; *nothing* could have given her composure commensurate with her need of it, under such circumstances, but the submission and faith of a Christian. This trial, so afflictive at the time, might yet hereafter be reverted to as the crowning mercy of her life,

* Jane Taylor.

by having led her to more complete subjection to the will of her heavenly Father.

Margaret Prout came in this morning, looking so pleased that I concluded she had fresh and better news of Mrs. Pevensey. But no—she had only a letter from Harry, and a note from Emily. I begged she would read me Emily's first, which she did. Emily said that immediately on hearing of what had happened, Mrs. Pevensey's maiden sister,—who goes among the young people by the name of Aunt Catherine,—packed up bag and baggage, got a passport and bills of exchange, and started off with a courier for the scene of affliction. What a comfort she will be to them all! Many would have shilly-shallied, and written to ask whether they were wanted, and looked about for an escort, and awaited a quiet sea for crossing, and nobody knows what, till the real day of need had passed. That is not Aunt Catherine's way. "What thou doest, do quickly,"

has, throughout her life, been to her a precept of Divine obligation. She does not do things hurriedly—all in a scramble, so as to be twitted with "most haste, worse speed," by people less energetic than herself; but she does them *at once;* consequently, she does them efficiently; while her ardour, uncooled, supports her through the undertaking, and makes her insensible of half the difficulty. I always regard this as a very fine element in her character. Aunt Kate does not look twice at a pill before she takes it; nor lose the post for want of finishing a letter in good time; nor send a cheque to be cashed at the county-bank after office-hours. She is never likely to be short of postage-stamps, or of money for current expenses, or to leave small debts unpaid, or small obligations uncancelled, and then to content herself with saying, "Oh, I forgot that!" There is no one on whom I should more surely rely for knowing, in a common-sense, unprofessional way, not only what remedy to take for any illness, or what measures to resort to in case of a burn, scald, or fractured limb, but what antidote to

administer for any poison accidentally taken—whether hot brandy-and-water for prussic acid, milk for vitriol, or an emetic for opium, followed by draughts of vinegar and water—thus preparing the way for the doctor she had lost no time in summoning, but who might not be able instantly to answer her summons.

Such a maiden sister as this in a large family household is invaluable. Nor does Miss Pevensey deteriorate the price set on her sterling qualities by acerbity, or bluff or snappish manners. On the contrary, she is cordial and easily contented—always ready to take, without saying anything to anybody, the least-envied seat in a carriage, or at table, or in church, willing to sleep in the room with the chimney that smokes, and to have the windows open or the doors shut, to suit her companions; though, of course, she has her preferences. And all this without the least servility—which, indeed, would be strangely purposeless, for she is in independent circumstances.

She is a small, thin woman, not in the least pretty; but excessively neat in her apparel,

and quite the gentlewoman; with a cheerful, sprightly manner, so that most people like her. She is not single because no one ever asked her to marry. She has grey eyes, an aquiline nose, thin lips, and wavy brown hair, banded under an airy little cap. You would seldom wish to have a dress off the same piece with her cheap, thin silks; but they are always fresh, and well made, and you see directly that they suit her exactly, and that what you are wearing would not suit her at all. I have not seen much of her, but what I have seen, I have liked.

Harry's letter was capital. He had been with the Whitgraves to Hampton Court, and after seeing the pictures, the maze, &c., they had dined on the grass in Bushy Park. It had freshened him up for a week. And Mr. Whitgrave had gone with him to the National Gallery, and told him what to admire, *and why*. And Mrs. and Miss Welsh had accompanied him to the British Museum, where they had spent a whole afternoon over the Assyrian Marbles.

"Only think," he wrote, "of our looking at the very Bel and Nebo mentioned in the prophecies of Isaiah! 'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth,' &c.,*—which they *did*, when they were taken from their pedestals by the victorious enemy. Do you know, that when Babylon was taken by the Persians, these two images were carried before the conquerors? Only think of their finding their way to the British Museum! There is old Nebo, with folded hands, and with an inscription on the hem of his garment, telling us (now we can read the cuneiform letters) that he was carved and erected by a sculptor of Nimroud, in the days of Semiramis, Queen of Assyria. As I gazed on it, I could not help thinking, 'Truly, *this* is poetry, and history too!' It now turns out that the famous Semiramis was not the wife of Ninus, but of King Pul, mentioned in the Old Testament; and that she did not live, as has been commonly supposed, two thousand years before the Christian era, but only eight hundred:

* Isaiah xlvi. 1.

which brings the date within a hundred years of that given by Herodotus, so long called 'the father of lies,' by people who would not, or could not, examine for themselves, but whose veracity is being more and more established every day by the researches of the learned. Of course, as a good deal of his information was picked up from hearsay, he was liable to occasional errors, like other people; but he seems to have been a careful, painstaking man, who went from place to place to collect information on the spot wherever he could; which was certainly a good deal more creditable way of gathering materials for a history, than that of many modern writers, who merely collect a few books around them in their study, and write out, day by day, what has been written in pretty nearly the same words many times before."

I thought this passage of Harry's letter to Emily (who had inclosed it to Margaret) so interesting, that I asked and obtained permission to copy it. How good a thing it is when brothers and sisters write in this free, communicative

way to one another! not merely pouring out their feelings, but taking the trouble to express thoughts, and thereby brightening and polishing the best properties of their minds by collision. The present Dean of Carlisle says, that he has known young men at college wholly restrained from vice, simply by the hallowed and blessed influence of their sisters.*

Arbell has again been heard from. Aunt Catherine had safely arrived, and they were all so glad to see her! Also an eminent English surgeon, who had been telegraphed for, and who accidentally, or rather providentially, crossed in the same steamer, and, seeing the name of "Miss Pevensey" on her carpet-bag, immediately introduced himself to her, and took care of her all the rest of the way. This was an immense advantage to Miss Pevensey, who speaks very indifferent French, and who, without a courier,

* The Rev. F. Close's Sermon, addressed to the Female Chartists.

could not have got on at all: besides, he prevented her thoughts from dwelling on one painful subject all the way, and told her several instances of remarkable recoveries, which greatly cheered her. He, on his part, was glad to get some idea of what sort of people they were who had sent for him, and became interested in Miss Pevensey's account of her sister-in-law's character and responsibilities. When they arrived at the *pasteur's,* Arbell said she was so glad to see her aunt, that she could not help the tears running down her face. Sir Benjamin pronounced dear mamma to be going on quite favourably; indeed, he thought her progress, as far as it went, almost miraculous; and said it showed that mountain-practice was not altogether to be despised. They were going to begin their homeward journey by very easy stages, as soon as an invalid litter could be constructed according to Sir Benjamin's directions, which would shake dear mamma as little as possible. They could not think how they could ever be sufficiently grateful for M. Peyranet's goodness — the only way in which

papa thought he could show a sense of it was, by giving largely to his poor.

The harriers and stag-hounds are out this fine November morning; and I see hunters in green coats and red winding down the steep chalky sides of the hill; while men, boys, dogs, and cattle all seem animated by the spirit of the chase—the cows and horses galloping round the meadows in search of some outlet from their confinement. Certainly, the distant horn does sound enlivening. For the poor hare there is no hope of mercy; but the stag has been so often turned out, that I hardly think he can believe himself in much danger. There he goes! I was cockney enough to mistake him at first for a donkey! How gracefully he cleared the gate! Off he goes, at a rocking-horse sort of pace. He will give them a good run yet.

The trees are now as many-hued as Joseph's coat of divers colours — orange, golden, lemon

colour, every shade of green, brown, and mulberry, some cherry red; but few trees, except the walnuts, are quite leafless. The pigs, with eager snouts, are grubbing for acorns around the oaks, —off they trot, except one, to a new locality; he is too busy to note them, till suddenly looking up, it seems to strike him, "*Can* they be doing better than I am?" and off he posts for his share of the spoils.

How much one may see from a window! I can descry long wavy sheets of gossamer, glittering with dew, shimmering in the air—the most exquisite texture conceivable, fit for the wedding-veil of the fairy-queen! The walnut-trees have been threshed; the wild-geese have flown home; the swallows flew off on the 21st of September. Many garden-flowers yet linger; but wild-flowers are reduced to a pitiful array, chiefly comprising daisies, yarrow, ragwort, and furze. Bright days are becoming fewer and fewer; but we had a fine Fifth of November, and I saw a rustic Guy Fawkes set down in the middle of the road by a party of merry lads, that they might scramble

over a gate and race after a squirrel. The sky-lark and thrush have not yet quite forsaken us, but our principal songster is the robin, who pipes away most merrily.

In one of Mary Russell Mitford's fairy-like notes to me, written within three weeks of her death, she says, "I am sometimes wheeled from my fireside to the window; and, about a month ago, a redbreast came to that window and tapped. Of course, we answered the appeal by fixing a little tray outside the window-sill, and keeping it well supplied with bread crumbs; and now he not only comes himself, but has introduced his kins-folk and friends. Think how great a pleasure!"

No news of the Pevenseys' return; but they must be slowly nearing home, unless any fresh causes of delay have occurred. Winter is steal-ing imperceptibly upon us; November has slipped away, and December has arrived, almost without the change being felt.

We speak of the merry month of May, and why not of the merry month of December? Well, there is an answer to that question; but, before I give it, I will consider what may be said on the bright side. True it is, that many of nature's processes are now veiled from human sight; but not less true is it that they are secretly progressing. The seed-corn is garnered in the earth; the earth itself in many spots is sweetening; the leafless trees are preparing to burst into verdure next spring; and, had we power to observe what is going on in their secret vessels, how much should we find to delight and surprise us! what multitudes of contrivances of which we have no knowledge, and even too delicate and complex to be comprehended! Meanwhile, many of the trees, when unlopped, have forms so beautiful as to present a delicate tracery, reminding one of black lace (though that is a miserable comparison), when seen in the distance against the clear, grey sky. There is little to do in the field; but the flail resounds noisily within the barn; and the horses and cattle enjoy the comfortable warmth

of the straw-yard. Then, within-doors, how snug and sociable is the fire-side! How the solitary enjoy the book, and the domestic party the long talks they had no leisure for in the summer! Christmas is coming; and is not that season proverbially merry, save where there is some sad domestic bereavement or affliction? How gay the shops are! with winter fabrics, and warm furs, and brilliant ribbons; with jolly sirloins, plump poultry, heaps of golden oranges, rosy apples, and all kinds of winter fruit! How gladly we think that the young folks will soon come home for the holidays! "I call to mind," says the genial Southey,

> "The schoolboy days, when, in the falling leaves
> I saw, with eager hope, the pleasant sign
> Of coming Christmas; when at morn I took
> My wooden calendar, and counting up
> Once more its often-told account, smoothed off
> Each day, with more delight, the daily notch."

Dearly do schoolboys love a hard winter, because it brings sliding, and skating, and snow-balling in its train. Is not December, then, a

merry month? Well, there is a reverse to the picture. In the first place, we poor, creaky invalids feel his cold touch in every joint, and at every shortening breath drawn from our wheezing chests, and very early in the month get shut up by the peremptory doctor; unless, indeed, we are too poor to be laid aside from the active toil that wins daily bread. Let the invalid with every comfort around her, think of those who have neither warm fires, nor warm clothing, nor warm bedding, nor warm food. See their sad, pinched faces, shrinking forms, chilblained hands, and ill-protected feet; think of their desolate dwellings, where the rain drips through the roof, where the broken pane is stuffed with rags, and where, for many hours daily, no fire burns on the hearth; and then refuse them sympathy and aid if you are not of the same flesh and blood, children of the same Creator! Oh, the time is drawing near when we may indeed warm our own hearts by warming the bodies of others! by putting shoes with warm stockings on bare feet, thick tweed on shoulders, and flannel on chests, coals in the

grate, and wholesome, nourishing food on the table! Here is our encouragement—"And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

As I look up from my writing on this 4th of December, I see a blue, cloudless sky shining above steep, chalky hills that are clothed with the short, sweet turf loved by sheep, below which are green meadows, cut with dykes, to drain them during the winter; leafless hedges and scattered clumps of trees, principally oaks, still clad in a good many yellow leaves. The tiled roofs of many scattered cottages in the lanes are now visible, that cannot be seen in the summer: all looks bright and cheerful. Such is hardly a scene to remind one of the real severity of winter:—

> "When all abroad the wind doth blow,
> And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
> And birds sit brooding in the snow,
> And Marian's nose looks red and raw,

When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
When nightly sings the staring owl,
'Tu-whit! tu-whoo!' a dismal note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot."

For my part, I like hearing the owl; perhaps because Shakspere has linked it with immortal verse. Dismal it is, I suppose—something like the forlorn cry of a belated traveller for assistance: its association with darkness and horror makes more vivid the contrast of the light twinkling through the casement, the crab-apples roasting and sputtering as they are popped, scalding hot, into the wassail-bowl, and Mrs. Joan's assurance to the hospitable host that she has had "quite enough," and has quite emptied her mug, to verify which, she turns it topsy-turvy—top-side t'other way.

Down comes the rain!—and enters Miss Burt with dripping umbrella, and dress hooked in festoons above her ancles, to tell me the Pevenseys

reach home to-day. She is full of the news, and has carried it on to the Seckers.

What a cheerless, wretched afternoon! Rain, rain, go to Spain! What matter? Home is home, be it ever so homely,—and the Stone House is anything but that, I am told—for I have never been within it. Mrs. Pevensey's first call was during my illness. How fresh and blooming she looked! I had heard of her numerous family, but not of her personal appearance—she did not visit any one I then knew, and I was unprepared for her sweet face and charming manners. She seemed to enter like a stream of sunshine, or like Una into the dark cottage of Abbessa. How kind, how good she was! — she thought she could never do enough for me.

And now she is ill herself—crippled, shattered perhaps for life, though comparatively restored; as motionless, I am told, as a figure on an altar-tomb. Sad, sad!

But she is not in pain, and her mind is as cheerful and alert as ever; and the little girls

will hang over her with warm kisses; and the baby, whom she cannot take in her arms, will leap and crow, and be held to her; and the faithful family servants will receive her in a flutter of sympathy, and hover about her with tender concern.

——I feel very lonely to-night. How quickly the day closed in! and how cheerless the rain sounds against the window-panes! The fire lights up with fitful gleams the picture on the opposite wall, and the footstool worked by Eugenia.

I remember, when we first went to Nutfield, Eugenia and I sallied out, one bright morning, with a basket, trowel, and old kitchen knife, to take up some of the pretty purple heath on the common for our flower-borders. We had not counted the cost. Snap went the thin old knife! Then we tugged and tugged at the tough stems with our hands, to the great injury of our gloves, and plunged at the roots with the trowel. But there seemed no end to those fibres and their ramifications underground—they spread inter-

laced and interwove in every direction:—and so, I think, must Mrs. Pevensey's social affections: —while I am like a flower in a pot.

Here is Christmas close at hand, and Emily Prout is looking forward to the speedy arrival of the holidays. Harry is expected to-morrow. He will return to a humble, but happy home,—all the better able to value it for having been away from his family for some months.

I have no prospect of any other than a lonely, and perhaps a dull Christmas; and I am shut up, I fear me, for the winter. I cannot walk; the donkey-chair is unsafe for me, now that the weather is so cold; and I cannot afford a close carriage. But I will endeavour to raise my thoughts from things terrestrial to things celestial —from Christmas feasting to Him whose birth-day feast it is:—

> "Not more than others I deserve,
> Yet God hath given me more."

Phillis has been very contrary lately. She is completely out of humour; does everything badly, and resents the least word of reproof. Instead of her waiting at table, it is *I* who *wait*, while she does not answer the bell. If coals are wanted, it is so long before she brings them, that the fire is nearly out; then she comes in, throws on half a scuttle-full, which, of course, extinguishes it completely; and, to finish all, upsets the remainder on the carpet. Then she goes off in a towering rage, comes back with dust-pan and brush, repairs the damage to the carpet in a very slovenly way, and then fetches an armful of chips and paper, which make a great blaze for a few minutes, and soon burn completely out. Is it not singular that persons will sometimes appear to forget how to do a thing that they have done, and done properly, for years?

This morning, though I was suffering from neuralgia, and a drizzling rain was falling, she scoured my bed-room all over, and set the windows wide open, whereby everything in the room is as damp and limp as possible. On my telling

her that I would rather have had the cleaning deferred till a drier day, especially when I was suffering from a cold, she replied that Friday was the day for doing it, and she would do it on a Friday, or not at all. On my rejoining—"Nay, is that a question for mistress or maid to settle?" she replied, she never knew such a mistress; nothing she could do gave satisfaction; and, as she saw it was no use trying to please me, she hoped I should suit myself with another servant by that day month; and then went off, banging the door after her, yet leaving it ajar.

I felt resentment. I knew I had been a kind mistress to her; had studied her comforts, allowed her many indulgences, and overlooked many faults; and this was the way I was repaid! I felt it very hard. True, I had given her much trouble during my long and painful illness; but she had been engaged on purpose to assist in nursing me through it, and undertake the whole general work of the little house; had said, again and again, the work was nothing, and, in fact, was always sitting

down to needle-work at five o'clock in the afternoon.

I was aggrieved: I thought, if she would go, she might: if there were no attachment on one side, why need there be any on the other? And as to getting another servant, why I *could* but have a tiresome one, and Phillis was that already.

In writing all this down I perceive some bad logic, but I felt very forlorn and depressed. When she came in to lay the cloth for dinner, she said not a word, nor did I; but her face declared war. The dinner could hardly have been worse cooked.

After dinner Mrs. Prout called. She seemed sorry to see me not looking well, and made such kind inquiries that a tear rolled down my cheek, and I told her all my trouble. She was very indignant at Phillis's conduct, which she called abominable; and she said she would look out for a better servant for me—a woman who could behave like that was not worth her wages. I softened a little, and said she was not always so

bad, of course; and when I had been so very ill, was really very attentive to me.

Mrs. Prout said yes, she remembered poor Mr. Prout saying I had a rough sort of creature to wait up me, but that she seemed kind-hearted.

"And, after all," said she, "when we consider how little training such women get before they go into service, and what indistinct notions they have of their relative duties, we must make great excuses for them."

"O yes," said I, "we must; and, perhaps, I have been too exacting."

"Well, it is possible you may have been a little so without intending it," said she. "We are all so apt to see things only from our own point of view, and not to make sufficient allowances for others. Still, I don't see how you can go on comfortably together, since she makes no allowances for *you*."

"Not unless she *would* make allowances," said I, doubtfully.

"Do you wish her to stay?"

"Why, yes, if she would go on comfortably;

for I can't bear strange faces, and we shall never find any one who is perfect."

"Then, shall I say a few words to her, when she lets me out?"

"My dear friend," said I, "I shall be *very* much obliged to you!"

So the kind little woman arose, after telling me that Mrs. Pevensey had reached home, and had borne the journey better than had been expected; and that Emily was to come home on Saturday. And after she had taken leave of me, I could hear her quiet voice for some time in the passage. I could also hear an indistinct grumble, grumble, grumble, from Phillis, and wondered what bad case she was making out against me. Then I heard Mrs. Prout's quiet voice again; but the only words that reached me were, "You really should not;" and, "You really should."

Then the door closed after her, and I heard a tremendous cleaning of fire-irons going on in the kitchen, and quantities of coals shovelled up, and quantities of water pumped up; after which ensued a lull. I lay back on the sofa, and stayed

my troubled mind with, "O Lord! undertake for me!"

Just as it was getting quite dusk, I was startled from a little nap by a smart ring at the back-door. A distant grumbling of voices ensued; and as some suspicious-looking tramps had lately been hanging about the neighbourhood, I became nervous, and rang the bell, to desire Phillis not to parley with any people of the kind, but to shut and bolt the door. She answered the bell, looking very glum.

"Who is that, Phillis?"

"Some one as has come after *my* situation. I should't ha' thought there'd been such a hurry!"

"Why, you yourself gave warning; and you have never said a word since of being sorry for it, and wishing to stay."

"You've never given me time!"

"To settle the matter at once—*do* you wish to say so now?"

"Why, dear me, how can one settle a question like that in a minute?"

"Send the person in."

"Then you *do* want me to go?"

"Phillis, have *you* ever said you wanted to stay?"

"Why, you knows as well as I do, that I can't abear change."

"There are other things, though, you must bear, Phillis, if you can't bear that. Let a family be large or little, it can never be a happy one where the great law of obedience is broken, and where the mistress is obliged to follow the lead of the servant. I do not mean to follow that course; and, therefore, if you wish to remain here, you must obey *me*."

"Why, don't I?"

"Certainly you don't."

"Then you want to see this gal?"

"Of course, it is the least I can do, since Mrs. Prout, no doubt, has been kind enough to send her down."

Phillis put the corner of her apron to her eye.

"Then 'tis you wants to change, not I," said

she, in a stifled voice; "for I'm very well content to rub on as I am."

I took no notice. The next minute, she showed a tall young person into the room, who stood close to the door.

"You may go, Phillis."

Phillis shut the door, and went.

"Good evening; will you come a little nearer?" said I.

The stranger obeyed, and I suddenly became frightened; for the stride and awkward gait convinced me it was a man in woman's clothes. Thoughts of robbery and murder rushed through my head as the figure advanced towards me; but just then, the fire, which had been burning dimly, sent up a bright tongue of flame, which lighted up the room, and shone on a face that I thought was not altogether unknown to me.

"Where do you come from?" said I.

"Little Coram Street, London, ma'am," in a voice of studied softness.

"Hum! then I fear a country place won't suit you."

"O yes, it will, ma'am! I likes the country best."

"I am afraid you are not used to hard work. Did you ever scour a room?"

"I can work harder than people think, ma'am."

"Well, but, *did* you ever?"

"O ma'am, there's *nothing* I mind setting my hand to."

"Or clean a saucepan?"

"Surely, ma'am, every servant can do that!"

"Who will recommend you?"

"Mrs. Prout knows me very well, ma'am."

"And so does Mrs. Cheerlove!" said I, laughing. "Oh, Harry! you impostor! I found you out directly!"

"Did you though?" said he, bursting into a fit of laughter, and throwing his disguises right and left, till he stood before me in his original dress. "Phillis didn't; and a good fright I've given her. Served her right, too! Listeners never hear any good of themselves, Mrs. Phillis,"

added he, as she put her head a little way into the room.

"Why, I thought I heard a man's voice, and it gave me quite a turn," said she, advancing in a hesitating way towards us; "and so I did,—for, whoever would have thought of its being *you*, Master Prout!"

"*You* didn't, it's certain," said he, rolling his things up into a bundle, "or you wouldn't have tried to set me against the place!—so there I have you! Recollect, I'm a lawyer, and can take advantage of you at any time."

She was, for once, without one word to say.

"Yes, yes," added he, "I've had a grudge against you this long while for calling me *Master* Prout, when all the world knows I've been *Mr.* Prout ever so long. One would think I took my meals in the nursery. So, mind you, Phillis, if ever you are uncivil to your mistress again, or ever more call me *master*, I'll show you I *am* your master, in one way or another. And, as for your not having answered the bell when Mrs. Cheerlove wanted you, because you were making

a cap, why, sooner than keep her waiting for that, I'd have worn a brown-paper cap like a carpenter. So now go and make the kettle boil —very boiling, indeed, for I'm come to drink tea with Mrs. Cheerlove; and we Londoners don't admire tea made with lukewarm water, I assure you."

Off she went, with "Well, I'm sure!" on her lips, but with by no means a displeased look on her face; and I could not help thinking, "Some people may steal a horse, while others dare not look over a hedge. She has taken a good deal more from 'Master Prout' than she would from Mrs. Cheerlove."

The Stone House, December 27.

When will wonders cease! I can hardly believe I am awake and in my senses,—yet so it is: —yes, here I am, spending the Christmas holidays with the Pevenseys:—

"And nothing meets my eye but sights of bliss."

They had only been at home a few days when Arbell came in, all smiles, to ask how I was, and to say that her mamma had thought a great deal about me; and that it had occurred to her that as *I* was an invalid, and *she* was an invalid, we should suit one another much better than if our positions were more dissimilar; and that though we were not equal to a merry Christmas, she did not see why we might not have a pleasant one. So she had resolved on my occupying a certain bow-windowed blue room, with dressing-room attached, during the holidays, and I should keep my own hours, and choose my own companions, and dine early, and see as much or as little of the family as I liked. She would not take no for an answer, and she would send the close carriage for me the very next day.

Well, as she would not take "No," for an answer, what *could* I say but "Yes?" and "very much obliged," too. It put me quite in a flutter, but a flutter of pleasurable excitement; for I have come to think the Pevenseys one of the most interesting families in the whole world. It was

very satisfactory to think that my wardrobe was in fine order; that my best caps, handkerchiefs, &c., were all beautifully got up, and ready for immediate packing; that my new black silk dress had not even been worn; and that I had got rid of the neuralgia just long enough not to be afraid even of changing my bed.

I am sure the real danger will be in returning to my own house! I have always considered it sufficiently snug; but the walls are so thin, compared with these; and there are many chinks and fissures we are obliged to stop up by ingenious contrivances, similar to what sailors effect by means of *shakings*. Whereas here, if you want to open a window, you may, indeed, do so with ease; but if you want it shut, it really *will* shut, without admitting a current of air strong enough to blow out a candle! or making a noise like the roaring of a lion, through some undetected orifice, as mine occasionally does at home, when least expected or wished. I determined Phillis should enjoy herself in my absence, and therefore permitted her to invite her widowed sister with her small baby, to

stay with her till my return, which she took very pleasantly.

And here I am, in the snuggest of dressing-rooms, on the first floor of the Stone House, overlooking a charming Italian garden, something in the Haddon Hall style, that is beautiful even in winter, with bright masses of evergreens forming backgrounds to its "storied urns and animated busts." And this dressing-room opens into a delightful bed-room, and also into a warm, thickly carpeted gallery, into which, also, open three other spare bed-rooms, one of which is at present occupied by Miss Pevensey, another by Arbell; chiefly, I believe, that I may not fancy myself lonely, as a door at the end of the gallery shuts off this wing from the rest of the house.

Lonely!—in a house with eight children and sixteen servants! A likely thing! Here, however, I may be as solitary, if I like, as a nun in her cell; but as it is now ascertained that I enjoy the family ways, I am continually having little visits from one and another. Firstly, Mrs. Kent

peeps in before I am up, to see whether the under-housemaid has lighted my fire, and to inquire how I have slept; and to ask whether I will have tea, coffee, or chocolate, in bed or out of it. Then, the aforesaid housemaid (Mary, her name is) helps me to dress, as nicely as Mrs. Kent could do. Then I step into the dressing-room, where I find a clear fire, and breakfast for one awaiting me; chocolate and rusks, may-be, or milk-coffee and French roll; or tea, toast, and a new-laid egg. After this I commence my little prayer-service and Bible-reading, as at home, while a prayer-bell, in some far-off quarter, which they tell me is much too cold for me, summons the household to prayers.

Immediately after this, the three little ones steal in from the nursery, saying,—"Will oo like to—to—hear our texts?" Of course I say "Yes;" and then one little creature says, "God is love;" and another reverently repeats, "Little children, love one another;" and another, "Live peaceably with all men." They learn something fresh every day. Then Arbell comes in, and we

have long, delightful talks, till Mrs. Pevensey, who sleeps late, is ready to hear her read a portion of Scripture: I think they talk it over a good deal together afterwards. Meanwhile, cheerful "Aunt Kate" looks in on me; brings me *The Times*, or "Pinelli's Etchings," or something by the Etching Club, or Dickens' last number, or anything she thinks I shall like; makes up the fire, and has a cheerful chat; but she does not stay long.

After this, I see no one till the one o'clock dinner, except Rosaline and Flora, who are happy to give me as much of their company as they may, till called off for their walk. At one, we all assemble to a very bountiful meal, presided over by Miss Pevensey and Arbell, who, I am happy to see, already carves neatly and quickly. Then they generally carry me off to the conservatory, music-room, or library, the weather not inviting the delicate to indulge even in carriage exercise. Towards dusk, comes the grand treat of all: Miss Pevensey, Arbell, and I, repair to Mrs. Pevensey's dressing-room, where we find her lying like a

statue, perfectly still and colourless, but with her active mind ready to enter on any subject, gay, or grave, that may be started. These conversations are truly enjoyable. They insist on my occupying a couch opposite Mrs. Pevensey's; Miss Pevensey establishes herself between us, in her brother's easy-chair, and Arbell sits on a cushion at her mother's feet. By the uncertain light of the fire, we harmoniously discuss all sorts of subjects, in a style not quite equal to that of "*Friends in Council,*" but that suits our requirements equally well.

The Swiss tour affords inexhaustible subjects of interest and entertainment. Sometimes Arbell tells what profound astonishment her tooth-brush excited among the country girls; at other times, they speak of the wonders of Mont Blanc, and Monte Rosa; and describe their arrival at the hospice of the Great St. Bernard—the hospitable reception of the good monks—their cheerful chat round the fire after supper—their attendance at morning prayers, before dawn, in the chapel—and afterwards witnessing the substantial breakfast

given to the peasants who had received a night's shelter, before they descended the pass.

Sometimes Mr. Pevensey comes in while they are thus talking, and exclaims—

"What! still among the mountains? Mrs. Cheerlove must be quite bored!"

"Oh no!" they boldly reply, "she is such a good sympathizer!"

Then he, his sister, and Arbell, go down to their two hours' dinner, which I privately think it a privilege to escape. Mrs. Pevensey and I have ice, fruit, cakes, and coffee. And then I see her no more, for Mr. Pevensey spends the rest of the evening with her; and I say good-night, and retreat to my own room, though not always to bed, if I have an interesting book.

Though Mrs. Pevensey is not well enough to receive visitors (except such a quiet one as myself), it has been very interesting to witness the benefactions to the poor, the Christmas-tree loaded with presents for the children and servants, the school-children's treat, the servants' feast, &c., which ushered in Christmas in this hospitable

house. In connection with these, something very mysterious was to take place on Christmas Eve, in the largest drawing-room, which was known only to Mr. Pevensey, Arbell, and a few assistants. Great expectations were raised, and most absurd guesses made, as to what could be going on,—much peeping, prying, and tittering outside the carefully-locked door, and many conjectures hazarded on the occupations of those who passed in and out. A good deal of hammering added excitement to the scene; and Mrs. Pevensey said, with some anxiety, she hoped they were not hurting the new white and gold paper; a tinkling bell was also heard.

At length, the longed-for hour arrived; the school-children had had their prizes and buns, the servants' friends had had tea and plum-cake, the Christmas-tree had displayed its glories, when, at the eventful hour of eight, the public were admitted, and Mrs. Pevensey was carried into the drawing-room. All were surprised, and rather disappointed, to find it so dark; and when Arbell had marshalled every one to their places,

it became darkness itself, for every light was extinguished. A laugh, a whispered remark, alone broke the silence, though all the household were present, and the general feeling was of awe.

At length, on the ringing of *a small bell,* the solemn, distant sounds of an organ were heard (a very good barrel-organ in the nursery, that played hymn-tunes), and a curtain, slowly rising, revealed the hospice of St. Bernard !—or, at any rate, so good a transparency of it as to give a very vivid impression of the place itself. There was the old monastic pile, shut in among craggy, snow-clad rocks—the adjacent church, the *morgue* —the gloomy little lake—the tiny patches of garden, in which the monks grow a few cabbages and lettuces. To add to the illusion, a twinkling light was seen in one of the distant windows ; a dog's short, sharp bark was heard afar off, and the tones of the organ conveyed the impression of a midnight mass.

It was very impressively, capitally got up ; and at small amount, as we afterwards learnt, of

trouble and cost. Ingenuity had been the prime artificer; and Mr. Pevensey was much pleased at the cleverness with which Arbell had seconded him. Altogether, the entertainment was well thought of, and gave unmingled satisfaction.

——I have come to the last page of my little note-book. Oh that the last page of my life's story may end as happily!

THE END.

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